

YOUR VIEW

The secretive Plymouth Foundation is a 'shadow arm of town government'

by Meg Sheehan

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An aerial view of downtown. (Photo by Jim Curran)

Garrett Tunison's Your View [letter] of Sept. 26, "**Town officials are 'clueless' when it comes to business development,**" describes the **Plymouth Foundation** as "the same old people and families that have been around forever...." That's true, and a public investigation is uncovering a lot more. The Plymouth Foundation is a **shadow arm of town government**. Its formal name is the Plymouth Regional Economic Development Foundation. In its previous iteration it was the Plymouth Industrial Development Corporation. The Foundation is an IRS 501c3 charity. This is a dubious status. Its 11-member board of directors includes three town officials: Town Manager Derek Brindisi, Town Planner Lee Hartmann, and Select Board Chair Richard

Quintal. The rest are developers like Rick Vayo, [along with] Bill Hallisey and Dee Wallace Spencer, business people, and state representative Matt Muratore.

The town taxpayers pay the full salary of the executive director, Stephen Cole, under a Memorandum of Agreement: taxpayers have forked over \$1.8 million to the Foundation since 2009. The Foundation does not comply with the Open Meeting Law even though it functions as an arm of the Department of Planning and Development, listing the executive director of the Foundation as town “staff.” The Foundation’s 2023 IRS tax returns say its website is econdevtownhall.plymouth.ma.us. This website, that is supposed to have the Foundation’s public records on it, does not exist, according to the town. Records show the Foundation is a conduit for land deals and has generated revenue from sand and gravel mining on land it got from the town, according to public records. Stay tuned for the ongoing investigation of this shadow entity and its land deals. Mr. Tunison heard “crickets” when he asked the Foundation questions. Wonder why?

– **Meg Sheehan**

Sheehan is an environmental lawyer and activist.

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