

The Wanderer
Marion Selectmen's Meeting
June 1, 2004

By Kenneth J. Souza

A regular meeting of the Marion Board of Selectmen was called to order on Tuesday, June 1 at 7:00 pm by Chairman David Pierce. Also present were Selectman Andrew Jeffrey, Selectman Jonathan Henry, Town Administrator John F. Dolan Jr., and Secretary Helene Craver.

At 7:43 pm the board met with State Representative William Straus (D-Mattapoisett). Representative Straus first said he recently filed legislation to approve the proposed joint water district for Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Marion and Rochester.

"So far, we're three for three in terms of the Town Meetings," he said. "Rochester is still pending, although financially they would come in at a later date. Last Friday we filed a bill -- it comes in as a kind of 'home rule petition.' After the meetings I had with the boards, there were some suggestions I had in terms of the towns' ability to protect the aquifer. One of my main concerns was that (each of) the towns' would still control their wells. The formal sessions with roll call votes conclude near the end of July, but this is the kind of legislation which can continue to be taken up in informal sessions. The triple clout there should serve us well."

At 8:00 pm Stuart Richardson joined Representative Straus to discuss the Marion Homes Program. "I had forgotten how long it had been, but it was in April of 2001 when I first sat down with (Mr. Richardson) to first discuss the Marion Homes Program," Representative Straus said. "I always (knew) if this was worded thoughtfully, the town could adopt its own statute. When we filed the bill on April 1 ... frankly, the reception we received was much warmer than I expected. Within the last week it passed 'fully engrossed' in the House. So far, it's been very encouraging so hopefully sometime this summer it will be in place to begin."

"Without Representative Straus' help, this thing could never have flown," Mr. Richardson said. "It was a complicated process. Talking to Senator (Marc) Pacheco's office today, all that remains is 'engrossing' and enactment, and then we're home-free. I believe that the HCD is simply waiting to see how it goes through the legislature, but I don't know that for sure. I know several other towns are right behind us: Dartmouth has already submitted their Homes Program and it will go to Westport Town Meeting on June 8. It's interesting to see how it's been going."

"He's much too modest," Representative Straus said of Mr. Richardson, adding that he really got the ball rolling. "He is the guy, believe me."

"I should say how much pride I have as one member of this board, knowing we're cutting new territory," Chairman Pierce said. "It shows a tremendous amount of progress."