

For the record we need to be clear that this is a Tribe Town issue; not really a public discussion. But, in the interest of providing corrections to some misinformation I will try to clarify.

To the best of my knowledge, every year the Tribe has placed "brush" across paths on the Tribe's Federal Trust Lands and paths, which should not be used as egresses, including this path.

We do this in order to preserve the work that we do to restore and preserve the delicate natural environment, on and near the beaches and cranberry bogs. We know that when we have put the brush barriers up in the past, people have taken it upon themselves and just removed them, and have taken our Tribal Government Private Property signage and thrown them into the bushes; irrespective of the fact that the property is Tribal Property and Federal Property.

This is the first year in several that we have had enough Tribal Rangers to go back and readdress all of the sensitive areas, including the paths; to ensure that the restoration and preservation work we are doing is working and still there. So that's why it seems like it's something new, but it really isn't.

It is our belief that certain easements were granted, but not all paths and walkways previously used were part of the Settlement Agreement for public or private easements and use.

As I had previously stated, this is a Tribe Town issue; and we had no intention or desire of escalating this or any situation into this type of inflammatory debate.

However, I needed to correct some misinformation. For us, the notion that an e-mailed letter sent to the Tribal office 30 hours before a public meeting (and the hard copy walked in about 27 hours before) should be considered as an invitation to discuss a governmental issue is in a word rather disingenuous. But that is not what was reported.

We gave the Town a week to make arrangements to attend and an option for another time if the time wasn't convenient. Not only didn't we get much more than a day's notice, it was for a public discussion not a government-to-government discussion.

I don't know why the Chairwoman of the Board of Selectmen has decided to take this type of a stance and tact. Last year and the year before, if there were an issue, the former Chairmen would simply pick up the phone or stop in to the Tribal Office, and vice versa for me to the Town and Town Office. However just since this year, we have had several instances where the Tribe has been expected to respond as if we were residents or the general public and not a government.

The Tribal Government has always assisted the Town in many areas. Besides the annual financial contributions the Tribe and Tribal Housing Authority gives to the Town in lieu of taxes and for emergency and operational services every year, we have also donated equipment like the ambulance(s), let the Town use our earth moving equipment, boats, trucks, quads and anything else they request. And this year we just donated the funds for the purchase of a brand new all terrain vehicle for emergency beach rescues. Plus, we have also invested our Tribal grant funds to repair, fill in and help pollutant run-off on the back roads like Old South Road and Lobsterville Road. As articulated in the 2009 Town Report, we provide a lot of additional value to the Town and previously the Town and residents have been grateful, but now for some, it all seems to be forgotten. At this point, that is neither here nor there.

Again, this issue is really a government-to-government discussion that needed to take place, not a public hearing or public discussion, but two governments working through an issue as neighboring and cooperative governments do. Last Friday we invited the Board of Selectmen to a Government-to-Government meeting to discuss the issue as two governments, who share a common area with potentially differing opinions and interpretations. So we are hopeful that we can begin to address this and any other issues as responsible elected officials, who have a mutual respect for each other's respective governments and obligations.

We are always willing to sit at the table with the Board of Selectmen to try to work through the issues. We have come a long way with the relationship between the Town and the Tribe. I am confident that we can come to a resolution on this issue as well; as long as there is a sincere desire to come to an understanding, I believe there is always a solution.

Cheryl Andrews-Maltais  
Chairwoman  
Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)  
20 Black Brook Road  
Aquinnah, MA 02535