

From: [Doug Ruskin](#)
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Cc: [Jen Rand](#); [Greg Orcutt](#)
Subject: Today's tax hearing
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 3:58:02 PM

Dear West Tisbury Selectboard:

Unfortunately, a family emergency will likely keep me away from today's tax hearing.

I would appreciate it if you would read the following opinion into the public record.

I ask that the select board start whatever process is necessary to permit the town to be able to impose a residential tax exemption similar to what has been done by Tisbury for years and Oak Bluffs more recently.

To be clear, I understand that certain analysis may be necessary, and there may be a financial cost to preparation. My request is to do that work, so that at this time next year, it will be possible to make the decision to go forward if it is deemed appropriate.

A residential exemption relieves the tax burden on year-round residents, shifting it to those who, although they are here only seasonally still impose a burden on the town.

There are two specific reasons I believe this is warranted: the first is infrastructure needs.

The five- or six-fold increase in population requires not just additional staff in certain areas during the summer season but also means our fixed infrastructure needs to be sufficient for that time period. But there is a year-round burden on some staff as well, the building department being a prime example as seasonal residents improve or build new homes, which work goes on off-season.

A second and no less important reason is the housing problem that is exacerbated by an increase in seasonal residences. This is manifested by the combination of loss of inventory and dramatic increase in prices, mostly caused by buyers who are not living here year-round. It is time that the housing solution(s) be at least partially paid for by what contributes to its cause. Such items as the recently proposed ADU pilot program would be easier to get approved if the cost burden was mitigated by an exemption. And if the higher rate imposed on seasonal properties dampens the real estate market in town for seasonal properties, it could help the year-round inventory.

These arguments are made based on my experience and observations, but they need to be better supported to actually enact a split rate, which is why I am asking only that West Tisbury be properly prepared to be capable of doing so by this time next year.

Thank you,
Doug Ruskin

From my phone