

YEAR IN REVIEW

A look back at people who made a difference

Editor's note: As we head deeper into 2012, here's a look back at 10 of our most heartfelt feature stories from 2011.

C. Peter R. Gossels

When former Town Moderator Peter Gossels stepped down from the podium after annual Town Meeting in April, it was for the last time. He had been running this important institution in local democracy for 30 years, and was replaced this year by Dennis Berry, who ran unopposed for the position.

Before becoming moderator, Gossels was town counsel and served on the Finance Committee.

When asked about his proudest accomplishments, Gossels said there are several.

"One was the institution of time limits on the debates. This has resulted in cutting the average time per article from 33 minutes in 1985 to 14 minutes in 2009.

"Another was adopting the 'pro' and 'con' microphones — an idea, and let me be frank, that I borrowed from the League of Women Voters. This allows me to create a conversation and produces a more civil debate.

"Third, I created 'The Moderator's Handbook for Wayland Town Meetings,' which explains the authority and function of town meeting and lays out the rules and regulations that govern the institution. New England town meetings are unique and many residents arrive for their first town meeting without ever having participated in one before. This booklet, then, was designed for them as well as an update and refresher for more seasoned participants."

As for parting words, Gossels said, "I'm extremely grateful to the town for granting me the privilege of presiding over a true democracy, which is Wayland's town meeting. I've tried to conduct these events fairly, impartially, and with a modicum of humor, while treating everyone who participates with respect. This is because I believe that giving everyone a reasonable opportunity to be heard at town meeting contributes to a higher goal than efficiency, namely the peace of Wayland. By the same token, by giving respect, one gains respect."

In a letter written by U.S. Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass., to Gossels, Brown wrote, "Your



U.S. Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass., presented a special citation letter to attorney C. Peter R. Gossels of Wayland. Sen. Brown said he was pleased to honor such a great man. COURTESY PHOTO

accomplishments serve as a guiding force for all those who have come after you. Your graduation from the prestigious Harvard University, service with the United States Army during the Korean War, and political and legal careers have all been the building blocks of a dedicated life worth emulating.

"Your life has been a testament to your dedication to your community, and it is an inspiration to see an individual so committed to serving others. May you thoroughly enjoy the years ahead, knowing both your military and civil service is greatly appreciated, and this retirement thoroughly earned ... Thank you for investing your efforts for so many years; you are an asset to our country."