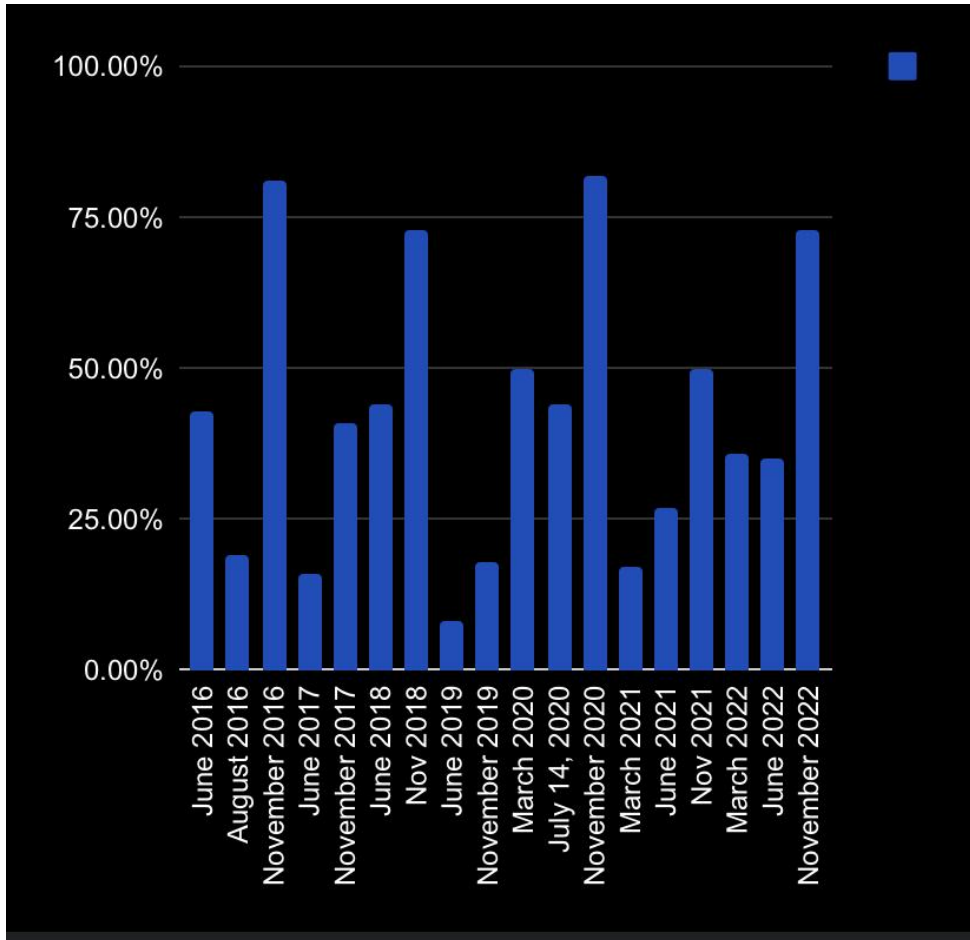


David Reed Testimony

LD1356 comes as a direct response to the two successful referendums to limit development of the village center in North Yarmouth. The first, done in March of 2022, had unusually high turnout, matching that of most June elections. The second occurred during the recent 2022 gubernatorial election. The referendum process seems to be working in its current form. The 10% requirement seems to serve as a sufficient indicator of public interest. It would be a different story if both referendums failed by considerable margins.

Anne Graham, one of the primary advocates for this bill, misled the people of Maine in her testimony.

1. The Select Board was involved in the process of putting those secret ballot elections together. (I know this because I was on the Select Board.)
2. Though we did not collect signatures for the first one, we did recognize that there was a public interest in having the referendum, and that it had a time sensitive nature. We made the decision to move it to March.
3. The Select Board took steps to inform voters. We sent a mailer to all citizens, and held a forum on the referendum.
4. Anne references the “deliberative process” of town business. The forum we hosted contained many similar elements to what one would expect to see at a town meeting. The only difference? Most town meetings don’t see over 5% of voters attend. Our forum had over 500 live connections (double that amount) at least according to data from Town Hall Streams.
5. Anne claimed that many NY elections see over 75% of voters turnout. This is completely incorrect. Only presidential and gubernatorial elections reach close to that number (see graph below)



6. The secret ballot with a single question on it drew more people than the June election that came shortly after it. 36% voter turnout is above average for a municipal election. 50% turnout for a municipal election is only able to be achieved if an election coincides with a presidential primary.
7. The Select Board members at the time considered the 36% as a substantial increase over the 5% that attend town meeting.
8. The second referendum, where the Select Board took the lead, appeared on the November 2022 Ballot. It was to fix further issues that citizens had identified with the village center land use ordinance. The measure passed, and the election had 73% voter turnout. Of course, this bill's sponsor would want to leave out that inconvenient fact.

I can only conclude that Anne opposes the referendum process because she knew what she had passed before was highly unpopular with residents. This bill, LD1356, is a spillover from North Yarmouth's politics. To understand part of why this bill was created, one must understand the following:

- In 2018 Anne Graham supported the comprehensive plan & land use amendments that concentrated new development in a village center over the aquifer.
- In 2018 Anne Graham was one of the 5 select board members to call a special town meeting to approve the changes. Only 51 people, about 1.5% of the voting population, showed up to the Town Meeting.

- In March of 2022 Anne Graham opposed efforts by citizens to amend the land use ordinance to institute a building cap in the village center.
- Later in 2022 Anne Graham opposed the use of citizen initiated referendums, and argued for using in person town meetings, where less than 5% of voters generally attend. This meeting format has no form of absentee voting.

Please reject LD1356, it is one of the few tools citizens have. It should not be made more difficult to use. This bill is being pushed by politicians who are more concerned with their own agenda than they are about their constituents. The bill only serves to degrade our democratic process.

Thank you.