

Open meeting law violation filed against selectmen

-WARREN-

By Jennifer Robert
Quaboag Current Reporter

Rescheduled from Dec. 17, the Warren Board of Selectmen post-

ed a meeting on Dec. 18 announcing a meeting to be held Dec. 23 at 6 p.m. with one item on the agenda, a joint meeting with the cable negotiating committee members and a Comcast representative to discuss section 3.1, which is the

area to be serviced and the Comcast license renewal.

A second meeting was also scheduled for the same day, to be held one hour later with a more comprehensive agenda. Mike Baril, a landowner in Warren,

filed an open meeting law violation on Jan. 17 against the board for an alleged violation of the open meeting law concerning executive sessions regarding the 6 p.m. meeting.

"The meeting was not posted as

an executive session," Baril said. "Even if there was an executive session, they still have to open the meeting and right from the start not only would they not let me in

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the room they told me I had to wait outside, outside the public building, so I went out and waited in the cold for over an hour."

Baril said that he, along with two other residents, attempted to be present at the meeting and none were allowed entrance to the meeting room.

After allegedly being told to leave the building during that meeting, Baril followed up his interest in the agenda by requesting a copy of the Comcast meeting minute on Jan. 7, at which time he was told by the Selectmen's Assistant Lorena Prokop that copies and details of executive sessions are not shared, according to his violation form.

"After her office, I went to the Town Clerk's

office to inquire about the submitted agendas, for Board of Selectmen 6 p.m. Comcast meeting for Dec. 17 and Dec. 23," Baril explained in his complaint. "They pulled the original submitted agendas and confirmed that the 6 p.m. submitted agendas display public meetings and display no mention whatsoever of any Executive Session."

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A section 21, the section which governs open meeting law executive sessions, states that a public body may meet in executive session for a number of reasons, including conducting strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel, according to subsection A2. However, in order to enter a

closed session the board must first convene in open session and have the majority of board members vote to go into executive session. The chairman of the board must also state to the public the reason for the closed session and whether or not the open session will reconvene at the end of the executive session.

The board has 14 business days to respond to the open meeting law complaint in writing, with details of any action taken to resolve the complaint.

"I suggested that the meeting could be null and void and reposted," Baril said. "The [selectmen] conducted open meeting items in executive session, in which residents having Comcast cable television service were not allowed to take part in discussions on their own cable rates and service."