



## Murphy named Hingham real estate counsel

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**Wicked Local Hingham**

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Hingham — Planning Board member Susan Murphy has been appointed the town’s real estate counsel by the Selectmen vote was unanimous among the three-member board this week.

“As of late we’ve had a number of real estate issues before us that we’ve been trying to deal with within our own volunteer corps,” Selectmen Chairman Bruce Rabuffo said. When asked what he was referring to, he explained that most involved such as the alleyway by the Snug which the owner would like to lease from the town to open an outdoor patio and the L Maritime Center leases with the town, which expire this year unless they are renewed.

More help is needed in dealing with these and other real estate-related issues, the board decided; hence the hiring of Murphy through the Boston firm Brennan, Dain, Le Ray, Wiest, Torpy & Garner, P.C., where she is employed and which set the \$150 per hour rate.

According to the company’s website, the firm offers “developers, business and property owners, and users experienced representation in all aspects of real estate development, ownership, and operation.”

“Susan is well-versed in the rules and regulations governing the town,” Rabuffo said. “That’s a plus.”

The issue as to whether this constitutes a conflict of interest since Murphy sits on the Planning Board (and also chairs the Harbor Planning Task Force) was brought before the state Ethics Commission, according to Rabuffo. “They said it was fine as long as Susan recuses herself if there is a conflict,” he said.

Bradley Woods Drive resident Robert Keyes, who was sitting in the audience, questioned the wisdom of such an appointment. “Wouldn’t it be easier to hire an outside counsel with no involvement with the town so there will be no question?”

Selectman Laura Burns responded, “We did that before and had a bad experience [because the counsel was not familiar with the town’s rules and regulations].”

Interim Town Administrator Ted Alexiades said the town will benefit from “having someone who knows the issues” they are facing. “There’s a higher bar for attorneys dealing with the ethics law and we can take some comfort in that,” he said.

“The consequences are severe for those who don’t reveal conflicts of interest,” Rabuffo noted.

On Wednesday morning, Murphy told the Hingham Journal, “For over 10 years in serving on various boards and committees I have always put the best interest of Hingham first. That is what I will continue to do in this new role. I am confident that I will work with the Town Administrator and Selectmen to avoid any conflict or even the appearance of conflict.”

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