URGENT: Formal Notice to Fairhaven Town Leadership | Immediate Attention and Action Required | On-going Civil Rights Violations

1 message

John Bennett <johnabennett66@gmail.com> Tue, Nov 3, 2026 at 6:15 AM
To: selectboard@fairhaven-ma.gov, aromano@fairhaven-ma.gov, namello@fairhaven-ma.gov, pkuechler@fairhaven-ma.gov, asaunders@fairhaven-ma.gov, rtrapilo@fairhaven-ma.gov
Cc: khickey@fairhaven-ma.gov, daniel.dorgan@fairhavenpolice.org, aco@fairhaven-ma.gov, svieira@fairhaven-ma.gov

To all addressed:

Regardless of when you assumed your current position or what your specific responsibilities are within the Town of Fairhaven, this matter must now become your UTMOST PRIORITY.

Some of you were not yet serving in Town government when these events began, but this is an ongoing matter, and the responsibility for addressing it now rests with all of you entrusted with public responsibility.

The implications are serious, both for the Town and for every individual entrusted with its governance. Those who are now aware of what is happening and choose not to take it seriously will ultimately have to answer for that decision to their own community.

This matter concerns an egregious pattern of abuse of authority within the Town's governance structure, leveraged against one of its citizens who has clearly identified himself as disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The result of this abuse includes multiple civil, constitutional, and HUMAN rights violations against me by my OWN town, endangering my life.

What I describe below is both ongoing and being *intentionally intensified* by all involved.

I DEMAND that the Town of Fairhaven acknowledge that it has NOT recognized my federally protected rights and immediately begin taking substantive steps toward restoring those rights, providing meaningful financial restitution, and addressing the lawlessness of its Police Force under the leadership of homegrown Chief Daniel Dorgan.

Begin forwarded message:

From: John Bennett <johnabennett66@gmail.com>
Subject: Formal Notice: Fairhaven, My Civil Rights under the ADA, and Public Accountability
Date: November 2, 2026 at 18:02:18 EST
To: khickey@fairhaven-ma.gov, daniel.dorgan@fairhavenpolice.org, cmurphy@fairhaven-ma.gov
Cc: aco@fairhaven-ma.gov, svieira@fairhaven-ma.gov

I am writing to give each of you formal notice that this matter is about to become exceptionally public. Your community colleagues, coworkers, families, and the wider public will have an opportunity to see what has transpired, how this Town has handled its responsibilities, and what each of you has done, or failed to do, up to this point. From here forward, people will be watching very closely to see how you respond.

Let me be clear: I intend to make this matter public regardless of what happens next. The issues at hand are going to be addressed. That is not in question. What I am giving you is an opportunity to begin addressing them now, so that your community can also see that you recognize the seriousness of what has happened and are prepared to take meaningful responsibility for putting it right.

Nearly one year ago today, the Town's Animal Control Officer, Kelsey, impounded my ADA Service Animal – overnight - *on the eve of my father's funeral services*. She knew the dog was a Service Animal. She acknowledged that I had a disability and understood the implications, yet she still refused to return my dog to me solely because the vaccination and licensing deadlines had passed by a few weeks. My dog had been sick, and veterinary guidance was that she should not be vaccinated while ill. Nevertheless, I was forced to have her vaccinated as a condition of having my Service Dog returned to my lawful possession. Her actions represented an egregious abuse of authority and violated multiple federal laws. Further, they resulted in very real harm to both me and my Service Animal. That harm is on-going and accumulating. *This issue is on-going.*

Attached is a copy of the letter I have now been compelled to distribute to every household on Bayview Avenue. The Town's failure to understand and meet its obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, compounded by the absence of any meaningful response from its Disability Commission, has left me with no reasonable alternative.

I have been forced to disclose deeply personal medical information to forty families who are effectively strangers to me. I have done so because protecting my ability to remain in my own home, and quite literally preserving my life, has required it. The ADA exists to prevent precisely this kind of burden from being placed on a person with a disability.

Last evening, while in the midst of an epileptic seizure, my system was further agitated by a knock at my door. I managed to collect myself sufficiently to answer it, still streaked with sweat and rather disoriented, only to find a fully armed Officer Furtado standing on my porch with my lovely eighteen-month-old Service Dog, Nala. She had apparently gone over the fence, something I had not yet noticed.

Officer Furtado was perfectly polite, but the focus of our interaction was largely on preventing Nala from leaving the property again. That completely misses the point. Nala leaving the yard becomes a problem only because Town leadership does not understand its obligations under federal disability legislation. Per that federal disability legislation, my Service Dogs must be accommodated and handled differently so they can provide the life-serving and life-protective assistance I require as a disabled member of this community.

Why Town leadership and its police force cannot recognize that my Service Dogs occasionally being off-leash in a neighborhood is no different in principle from a Service Animal accompanying its handler on-leash in a restaurant is utterly beyond me. This is not complicated.

My Service Dogs cannot be so strictly confined, as the Town is requiring, and still provide the life-sustaining assistance I need. We require greater latitude in how they work and move so that I can live. Whatever the Town believes it has provided under the ADA, it remains insufficient. An accommodation must actually meet my needs, and the Town must do more until it does. This is not about convenience or access to a favorite restaurant. It is about whether I can continue living, whether I can take my next breath, and whether my Service Dogs can provide the assistance on which my life depends.

Bringing an *armed police officer* to my door was entirely unnecessary and over-reactive. It was a wholly disproportionate response given the situation at hand, the individual whose home was being approached, and the wealth of information already provided to the Town informing it of my needs so that I might live amongst you as a disabled resident.. The resulting intrusion further agitated my system during an epileptic seizure, endangering my life. I have explained the potentially life-threatening consequences of these interventions repeatedly over the past eighteen months. Sending an armed officer onto my private property under these circumstances represents an egregious violation of my civil rights and an affront to the constitutional protections that safeguard the privacy and security of my home.

Two words: unnecessary and dangerous. If Keith Hickey is prepared to assert that my Service Dogs create disturbances in the neighborhood, perhaps he should consider what introducing an armed police presence does to a peaceful neighborhood. All of this over a beautiful eighteen-month-old Golden Retriever peacefully sitting outside someone's home.

You have lost yourselves.

If the Police Department reviews its own call records, it will find that on a street with more than forty homes, repeated complaints originate from just two or three individuals, one of whom is a Town Board member, Mr. Rui DaSilva. This is hardly a neighborhood-wide concern. I am already receiving positive responses from many neighbors following the distribution of my letter, and the Town should expect to hear from others.

Keith Hickey has demonstrated an outrageous lack of understanding of the purpose and responsibilities of public service. Based on the pattern of behavior I have witnessed across the Fairhaven Police Department, I can reach no other conclusion than that unlawful police behavior is being covered up. In speaking with others in the area, I have repeatedly heard accounts of belligerent interactions with Fairhaven Police and a troubling attitude toward the very citizens they are sworn to serve. This points to a horrific failure in leadership.

These are not isolated incidents, and I am not a lone resident raising a solitary complaint. There is a broader community concern, and people are increasingly unwilling to accept this treatment as normal. I am formally charging that the department, under Chief Dorgan’s leadership, has lost its way and represents a danger to the community it is meant to serve.

The Town government, in its existing structure, appears either unwilling or incapable of addressing it.

Please read the attached letter carefully. This is not a threat. It is notice that I am making these events and the Town's response public. The attention this matter receives will be substantial. The wider community will be watching, and the world will have an opportunity to see how each of you responds from this point forward. What happens next is in your hands.

Jake



Letter to My Neighbors.pdf
184K

Hello, Neighbors.

My name is John Bennett. I live at 33 Bayview Avenue. You can call me Jake.

I would like to introduce myself and explain a little about my circumstances, my two Service Animals, Franklin and Nala, and something that has become increasingly important to my ability to live peacefully in my home and in this neighborhood.

I live alone with no local family or friends to offer any sort of support. It is just me and my two Service Animals.

I am considered disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a Federal Civil Rights law that guarantees specific protections. Those protections are being repeatedly ignored by certain neighbors and town officials alike. As a result, my ability to live a full life in this community has been severely compromised, with devastating consequences for my physical well-being.

I suffer from severe temporal lobe epilepsy, a serious and sometimes debilitating neurological condition that can progress to loss of consciousness and significantly limit my physical ability to respond to circumstances around me. My condition has progressed to such a state that my living situation can best be described as *self-provided hospice care*.

Both Franklin and Nala are recognized as Service Animals as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Despite how friendly and approachable they may appear, Franklin and Nala are NOT "pets," even as I adore them, spend nearly ALL my time with them, and lavish them with affection. They are working dogs, just as police dogs and military working dogs are. They put their handler's well-being, MY well-being, ahead of their own. Their work is essential to my safety, health, and independence.

For the past four months, I have been effectively housebound. Other than occasional short errands or a walk half a block down the street and back, I have been unable to get out and about. Consequently, Franklin and Nala have not been getting the exercise and activity they are accustomed to. They're energetic dogs, and frankly, they're bouncing off the walls. Nala is naturally more inclined to venture beyond the yard under these circumstances, as she is only 18 months old.

I generally know within minutes when Nala has left the property. I either sense it or Franklin lets me know. Depending on what I am experiencing physically, I may need a little time to collect myself, put on my shoes, get Franklin ready, and go outside. In my experience, Nala is almost always close to home, usually within 75 to 100 feet, and ready to return.

Her being outside is NOT an emergency for anyone. She is in no danger. I am in no danger. She presents no danger to anyone. Nothing is wrong, and nothing needs to be done.

What you see, a dog out-and-about in the neighborhood, is simply *different* from what you may be accustomed to seeing. When we were kids, we saw it all the time. Further, my civil rights as protected and guaranteed under the ADA supersede local leash law ordinances in this case, whether the Town itself understands that or not.

If you see Nala outside, the best thing you can do is *nothing*. Enjoy seeing a beautiful dog passing by. If she comes over for a hello or a stroke, feel free to say hello. Then carry on with your day. Everything is fine. It will resolve itself.

If you feel compelled to do something, please start by sending me a text. Let me know Nala is outside and ask whether I'd like you to bring her home or whether I'll come get her. I may not be able to respond immediately, but when I recognize that Nala has crossed our property line, checking for messages is the FIRST thing I do.

While it is natural for you to believe that the best course of action is to bring my Service Dog back to me as soon as possible, that is not the case. The upset to my system due to the unexpected knock on my door will cause more upset than the return of the dog will relieve. I may not even be aware yet that she has left the property. A knock AFTER I've acknowledged your text is anticipated and entirely welcome.

Again, the best thing you can do is nothing. If you genuinely want to help, text first. Nala is safe. I am safe. There is no emergency.

The absolute worst thing you can do, in service of my health and well-being, is to involve the police in a situation that could readily be resolved amicably and caringly between neighbors.

Which brings me to what I experienced last evening, November 1...

At approximately 6:30 p.m., a Fairhaven police officer appeared on my doorstep with Nala while I was in the midst of a seizure. He indicated that he was responding to a call from a neighbor living nearly directly across the street. Nala was wearing her Service Animal vest, clearly identifying her and providing my contact information.

Further, this particular neighbor knows full well that Nala is my dog. Yet, he has repeatedly requested police intervention... for his disabled neighbor's ADA *Service Dog* sitting peacefully in front of his home. Why? I have no idea.

This intervention was entirely unnecessary. The neighbor has been fully informed of my medical condition and that Nala is a Service Animal, as has the Town of Fairhaven. In light of that knowledge, I experience this kind of intervention as cruel. It has a very real, immediate, and debilitating impact on me.

The encounter triggered an even more severe seizure episode, with seizure activity continuing from approximately 7 p.m. until 5 a.m. this morning. Ten hours.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated concern. Repeated calls to the Fairhaven Police by two or three adjacent neighbors have created a pattern that I experience as harassment. This matter is being taken seriously and is the subject of an ongoing investigation. The Town administration, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, the ADA Commission, the Police Chief, and the Animal Control Officer have ALL been well-informed but have been deaf to my pleas that my federal rights be recognized and *reasonable accommodations* made as required under the ADA.

Those responsible for unnecessarily escalating the circumstances of a disabled neighbor into police action - including one who is a member of a Town Board - are formally on notice, again. These calls and the resulting intrusions of armed officers on my porch have very real impacts on my health, safety, and well-being. These matters, including violations of my civil rights, are being addressed separately.

To those of you who have been compassionate, understanding, and kind, thank you. Some of you have brought Nala home, checked on me, or simply given me the time and space to retrieve her myself. I cannot adequately express how much that means. I apologize for having to bring this ugliness into a letter to the neighborhood.

While it is disconcerting that I have had to make such a public disclosure of my private health information – exactly the situation the ADA was introduced to *prevent* – I remain hopeful that we can now move forward together, resolving ordinary neighborhood matters between neighbors, and live together peaceably in this lovely neighborhood.

Jake

781-223-5332

PS... If you don't know who Franklin and Nala are, shoot me a text and introduce yourself. I would love to make your acquaintance and will be happy to send a couple of pictures back to you.