

# Little Compton

FIRST TWO VISITS:

OCT. 31

NOV. 19

“ The Town Clerk’s office was willing to help get me the most recent information. The Clerk made special copies of the minutes that had not been approved yet and indicated they were just a draft. The clerk behind the desk at the Police Department was rude. She asked me, repeatedly, why I was there, and seemed to remember seeing my partner a few weeks prior. She demanded that I give thm more information than the ‘other girl who was here.’ She asked if I was working on the project for Roger Williams College, and did not believe me when I told her I was just a concerned citizen. She called in the officer on duty. He happened to be the officer I had asked directions from the last time I was there, and he remembered me. He became defensive and said that he needed more information from me than the ‘other girl’ if he would consider giving me what I wanted. He basically asked me to leave unless I would tell him with whom I was working. ”

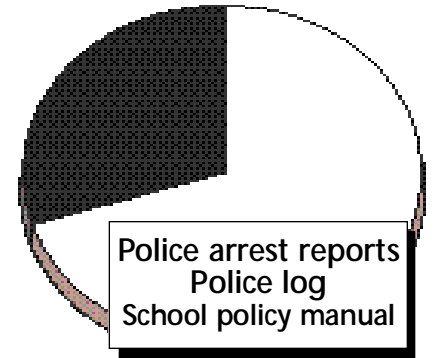
### School Committee Minutes:

- Readability: Average
- Thoroughness: Poor
- Layout: Average
- Legal Compliance: Full

### City/Town Council Minutes:

- Readability: Average
- Thoroughness: Poor
- Layout: Poor
- Legal Compliance: Full

### Documents Not Received

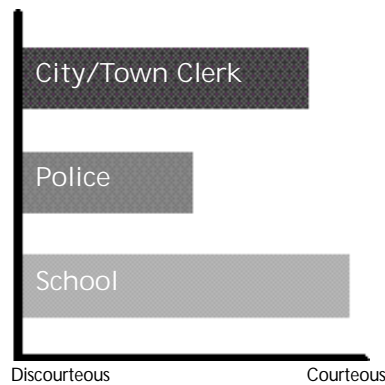


The Open Meetings Law has been the subject of considerable controversy in Little Compton. A complaint was filed against the Agricultural Conservancy Trust in September 1997 for allegedly violating the law. That complaint “comes on the heels of a lawsuit against the Budget Committee for failing to post meeting notices in more than one public location and not posting detailed agendas before meetings.” (Liz Foran, “Council is Urged to Hold Workshop on Meetings Law,” Providence Journal-Bulletin, September 19, 1997, p. C1) A School Committee member has since requested that the Town Council schedule meetings to review and explain the law to all Town Council members.

These expressions of concern about open government have not produced any obvious changes. Indeed, based on research visits in early to mid-November, Little Compton was rated as one of the least courteous jurisdictions in the state. The town as a whole did not comply with our requests 30 percent of the time. The Town Clerk’s office was rated “somewhat discourteous” and the police were rated “very discourteous.” The Police Department was not only hostile, but they did not comply with any of the requests for public records. Across the town as a whole, the clerks inquired about the reason for the request and asked for identification in 70 percent of the interactions. More than one researcher described the environment as intimidating.

Even though the town employees were not welcoming to the public, no return trips were necessary to obtain any of the documents made available.

### How We Were Treated



### Comparison: Cities/Towns

