

TOWN OF HEBRON
JOINT MEETING: BOARD OF SELECTMEN- REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF FINANCE- SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 12, 2009
DOUGLAS LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

RECEIVED
7:00 PM
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Cathy A. Pomprowny
HEBRON TOWN CLERK

BOS PRESENT: G. Mulligan, M. Stuart, B. O'Connell, J. Watt

BOS ABSENT: W. Moorcroft

BOF PRESENT: M. Hazel, P. LoBianco, L. Bow (7:43), M. Leichter (7:45), D. Ferree, D. Larson

BOF ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: J. Clark, Town Manager; J. Day, Finance Director; E. Griffin, Finance Administrator; B. Fitzgerald and J. Richmond, Registrar of Voters; C. Pomprowicz, Town Clerk; K. Kraynak, M. Gendron, J. Mercer, Resident State Troop; R. Blais, Fire Marshal/Emergency Management; S. Garrard, Senior Center Director

J. Watt called the BOS meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. and invited the BOF to participate in their meeting. M. Hazel also called the BOF meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. and invited the BOS to participate in their meeting.

Public Comment:

Linda Bulkovitch, Senate Brook Drive: Ms. Bulkovitch read a letter to the BOS and BOF (Attached).

Ron Parkyn, Reidy Hill Road: He retired as a lieutenant after 27 years with the Hartford Police Department. He advises against eliminating any public safety (State Police or Constables), which is really not costing a lot for what we are getting. If it is eliminated, it will take a lot to get it back.

Jardo Opocensky, Settlement Road: He asked if the BOS could do something about the residents getting newspapers just thrown on their driveways. He noted that it is the worst prior to a snow storm because his snow blower keeps shredding it or it just becomes a wet heap. This practice is creating a mess all over town and costing the town money. Is there a better way?

Beth Fitzgerald, Scarborough Road: She invited the BOS and BOF to a team spelling bee challenge at RHAM fundraiser to benefit the school district and the community. It will be held on April 16th.

J. Watt was asked by other residents if they could speak about a topic tonight after it was presented? Both boards indicated that they would entertain public comments after each of tonight's presentations.

M. Stuart added that each meeting has a public comment section and that there will be a town wide public hearing on this town budget before it goes to referendum.

M. Hazel added that this whole process is "very fluid"- this budget will continue to evolve as each department is heard from. The BOF last meeting is very important because that is about the budget that will go to referendum.

Departmental Presentations/Discussions:

Registrars- Account 1070:

Beth Fitzgerald and John Richmond presented their budget. J. Richmond reported that they have reduced the budget by \$679 from what they originally had proposed. He asked if there were any questions?

J. Watt asked if their proposed budget is any different from the Town Manager's proposed budget? J. Richmond responded that it is the same.

B. Fitzgerald noted that a couple of things can be decreased. There is a phone line that the town is required to have for handicapped voters. They key their vote into the phone and then their ballot is placed into the machine. The town can turn the phone line on and off. If the town uses it just for the time of voting, they will have to pay the turn on fee and for the weeks that it is used. Ultimately this translates to a cost savings of \$164. J. Richmond added that the state has informed them that this phone line only needs to be active for the general election.

B. Fitzgerald then noted that they could have some savings from the conference line item because they will not need to stay overnight this year (08/09) because the conference this year is in Cromwell. The anticipated savings this year is around \$400. They still have the money in this line item for next year's budget because they do not yet know where the conference is being held and if they will have to get two rooms and stay overnight.

B. Fitzgerald also noted that they do not need the \$100 to hire someone as an assistance registrar.

Town Clerk- Account 1060:

Carla Pomproicz, presented. She noted that she and J. Clark have met a few times to see where she can save money. C. Pomproicz is very comfortable with J. Clark's recommendations to cut her budget.

She then noted that there was an additional recommendation to take \$3,000 out of the land records account, bringing that account down to \$19,000. She is comfortable with this because this account is directly related to the amount of land records recorded and their numbers are down. If for some reason they go over budget on this line item, the additional volume of records would in essence pay for itself.

C. Pomproicz then noted that she is very comfortable cutting some money from part-time support. She is proposing to decrease this line item from \$2,500 to \$1,500. She wants to leave some money in for times when they are busy or someone needs to take some time off from work.

M. Leichter asked if she had any capital needs this year? C. Pomproicz responded "no" noting that the grants have been helping them out.

J. Clark noted that under the town charter, elected officials budgets cannot be cut by the town manager. They are passed through to the BOS and BOF. The town manager can make recommendations.

Police Department- Account 2001:

J. Clark noted that originally he was proposing to continue operations at the existing level. But with the Governor's announcement to increase the town's cost for Resident State Troopers from 70% to 85%, he is now proposing to cut the second Resident State Trooper which will save the town approximately \$80,000. He noted that there has been a request within the community of having a 0% tax increase.

Kelly Kraynak and Mark Gendron, Hebron's State Troopers were present. K. Kraynak introduced Sergeant Joseph Mercer, Resident Trooper Sergeant. K. Kraynak invited him here tonight to answer any supervisory level questions she might not be able to answer.

K. Kraynak reviewed the information she has provided to the BOS and BOF. She then asked if there were any questions.

K. Kraynak noted that it is not clear if the town's increased cost for Resident State Troopers will be changed to 85% or even 100%. It is being fought at the state capital. She did provide these two budgets- one at 70% and another at 85%.

She also provided a third budget representing the town going back to one resident state trooper with part-time officers. She noted that under this budget, the town would have to hire a sixth officer to be able to staff heightened patrol hours. She also presented a fourth budget proposal with two Resident State Troopers and the admin officer with no part-time officers.

M. Hazel asked how everyone would recommend handling the 70% vs. 85% budgeting issue at this time? M. Leichter recommended budgeting based on what it is today (70%). M. Leichter noted that most of eastern Connecticut uses Resident State Troopers. He wondered if there was an organized effort to prevent town's from having to pay more than 70%?

J. Clark responded that there are a group of organized municipalities in eastern Connecticut who are lobbying against this cost increase. Their position is that in these economic times, we are going to need policing more, not less. Also the way that the Resident State Trooper program is currently regionalized enables more effective policing than any single community alone in investigating the recent rash of break-ins.

A discussion ensued about how the town should budget the potential cost increase for the Resident State Troopers.

J. Watt asked what would happen if the town's Resident State Trooper left? J. Mercer responded that the vacancy would be posted immediately and filling that position is a very highly competitive process with very qualified candidates. The learning curve is getting to know the community.

K. Kraynak noted that she has been in Hebron for almost six years. She is considering stepping down in the next year, year and a half and giving someone else the opportunity. She noted how much she has done for this community to date.

The discussion turned to the Troop K policy on the Constabularies taking case numbers. K. Kraynak passed out a copy of this policy as well as a copy of the feasibility study for second resident state trooper.

B. O'Connell noted that over the past few years the amount of shifts filled by the Hebron Police Officers were relatively low. This past year it was better. If the number of local police is lowered, what kind of impact would that have for special events?

K. Kraynak noted that with two Resident State Troopers, the number of shifts available to the Constables dropped from 30 shifts/month to 18 shifts/month. They run into problems with filling these shifts is if an officer gets hurt and is on medical leave, if they are on military leave, etc.

In regards to special duty jobs, the shifts are not getting filled. When this happens, she is forced to hire additional troopers.

If the local police force is reduced, from a crime standpoint (e.g., motor vehicle violations, burglaries) what would be the impact? K. Kraynak responded by explaining her rotating schedule, noting that perhaps all shifts would not be filled. She then explained that only the Resident State Troopers are allowed to do all investigations. The Hebron officers can only investigate accidents. J. Mercer noted that this is a State Police policy, designed to maintain continuity and a good quality investigation.

G. Mulligan asked if it was possible to hire Hebron Constables full time so you get more hours, more dedication to the town, etc.? J. Mercer responded that there would be a much greater increase in costs and they would be limited in regards to the types of investigations they can do.

K. Kraynak noted that she considered this option in her feasibility study and found that the costs were greater. It would cost a lot more to hire the Constables full time. J. Mercer noted again the state trooper's ability to provide a greater number of services.

M. Leichter asked how much time the Hebron Resident State Trooper spends at RHAM? It was noted that RHAM's resource officer may be cut. J. Mercer noted that the Hebron Resident State

Trooper would be spending more time at RHAM if the resource officer were cut, but it would not be equivalent to the level of service they receive now.

M. Leichter wondered if it would be possible to regionalize constabularies? J. Clark responded that he has gotten a legal opinion that any service a municipality provides can be regionalized contractually. M. Leichter asked K. Kraynak if that would be a possible costs savings?

J. Mercer responded again that constables would not be able to provide the same types of services to the towns. He added that there are some liability issues with regionalized constabularies as well.

J. Watt asked how the Resident State Troopers work with AHM? K. Kraynak responded that she is a very active member of Juvenile Review Board. She has also worked with AHM on the Drug Task Force. AHM also supports the DARE Program.

D. Larson asked whether they plan on expanding the number of troopers from Troop K? Maintain the same level? If the town uses two Resident State Troopers and an administrative assistant next year, how is the town going to be covered? If one Resident State Trooper goes out due to an injury, etc., how long before the town gets a replacement?

J. Mercer did not know if the staffing levels at Troop K would stay the same or increase. As far as Hebron's coverage, there is going to always be a Troop K Trooper who is assigned the town of Hebron and the town of Marlborough and a little bit of Route 2. This is the same trooper that would be called before the town officer.

K. Kraynak noted how she could modify her schedule and fill it in with constables to get complete coverage for the town.

J. Mercer noted that if a Resident State Trooper is going to be out more than a week, they will find a suitable replacement. K. Kraynak noted how Hebron would not have a replacement readily in place for a constable.

M. Stuart asked what the expectations were for constables to cover shifts? K. Kraynak responded that they are suppose to work three shifts/month. This is a town expectation.

G. Mulligan asked if there would be any costs savings if a civilian were used instead of a sworn officer for their administrative position? K. Kraynak responded that the savings would be about \$3,000, plus her uniform allowance, adding that the current sworn administrative officer also helps her with car seat installations and DARE. K. Kraynak will check whether she would have to be a sworn officer to be able to help her with the DARE Program.

J. Watt asked if there were any constables here tonight who wished to speak on their role/positions. Marc Rubera stepped forward to speak.

M. Rubera noted that this is a difficult situation because he has nothing against the Resident State Troopers. He noted that he is a retired Hartford Police Officer. He is a very experienced police officer. He is currently a Hebron Constable.

In regards to powers of arrest, M. Rubera can make an arrest. The state police will do the paperwork. He noted how and why there could be a delay with the state police arriving. He noted that any police officer can enforce any criminal law. The state police do the paperwork. To him, what protects people is visibility and quick response time.

In regards to value for the dollar, M. Rubera noted that his hourly rate is much lower. In addition, the town pays for the Resident State Trooper's sick days, training, car, gas, meal allowance, etc. You just pay him his hourly rate.

In regards to constables availability, M. Rubera noted that he can fill available shifts. If someone gets hurt, how their position is filled should be part of the town's procedures.

M. Rubera noted that if you get rid of the four constables, they will lose their job. If you get rid of a Resident State Trooper, they will go back to the Troop and get assigned a new job.

J. Watt noted that the BOS and BOF is just looking to make an informed decision. They have not yet made a decision on what to do.

B. O'Connell asked if it would be feasible to just have two constables that just work more? Is there a way to work the schedule/policy to give the town the coverage they need with just two constables?

K. Kraynak noted that as of last year, the town now has four part-time constables on patrol. That is not enough to cover the shifts right now. Out of the officers working now, she thinks that only one of her current officers would be able to fill the 21 shifts/month required to get the coverage.

Everyone noted that the past few years not all the money allocated for patrols was spent. The town may have to look at changing its policies on covering these shifts to make sure the coverage is provided and the money is spent.

M. Rubera noted that it is substantially cheaper to pay a Hebron Constable to cover shifts so to him it makes more sense to hire more Constables than drop the number down to two. K. Kraynak noted what you get for the dollar (i.e., types of services) from a Resident Trooper versus a Constable.

E. Griffin noted that the town divides out the Police Department Budget and has several different line items (e.g., town sponsored events line, private duty). Some of these line items are not being used because of the way coverage is being provided. For example, this weekend no

Constables are available to work so the town sponsored events line item might not be used at all this year. She suggested taking a look at how this whole departmental budget is being used.

E. Griffin and K. Kraynak will meet to determine how the departmental budget is being used and where money could be saved.

M. Leichter thanked K. Kraynak for all the information she provided. He also added that he would like to keep the police coverage at least where it is in these economic times.

The BOS and BOF will wait to get more information before they decide to budget for Resident State Troopers at a town cost of 70% or 85%.

J. Watt asked if there were any public comments.

Joel O'Connor, 75 Smith Farm Road: He comes from a law enforcement family. The town cannot cut any police coverage, fire department, EMS, etc. In this economy we need more public service. We deserve it.

Karen Strid, Slocum Road: She agrees with the man who just spoke. The town has some tough decisions on where the town can save and cut staff. She noted that as the town's population has grown, the number of staff has not increased. In this economy we are going to see more desperate things so it does not make sense to reduce the police. She is a strong advocate for two Resident State Troopers. She does not want to see any policing staff cut.

Rebecca, 200 Deepwood Drive: The police presence is comforting and necessary. She noted that at the events they are always helpful and approachable. To not have them at these events and out around town would be a huge disservice to the community.

G. Mulligan commented that she does not want to see cuts made to the Police, Fire Department and AHM in these economic times. She noted that they are really looking to reduce smaller things that will not result in a reduction of staff or services.

J. Watt asked J. Clark to distribute a letter from Scott Warner regarding the Constables.

Fire Marshal/Emergency Management- Account 2011/2030:

Randy Blais, Fire Marshal presented his budgets. He noted that in the original budget he submitted he included salary comparisons for other Fire Marshals in the capitol region. His current salary is on the low side but he understands the economic times.

R. Blais then noted that although he does have money in his budget to pay the Deputy Fire Marshall, he cannot pay out this money to him because this person is currently an elected official. The Town Manager used this money to increase R. Blais' salary.

Professional organization dues went up. R. Blais is not currently up to the CT State Statute requirement of annual inspection of buildings. He noted that he has been having more CO emergencies because people are not maintaining equipment. He also noted that he has been doing more propane inspections because people seem to be changing from oil to propane.

The discussion then turned to the fact that R. Blais is also a certified Building Inspector. He has been filling in for the town's building inspector when needed. J. Clark commented that R. Blais fills many different roles. R. Blais is also a certified EMT and Firefighter. J. Clark has been trying to improve his compensation because he would like R. Blais to stay with Hebron because he works in so many capacities for the town.

R. Blais noted that the town gets reimbursed for 50% of the Emergency Management salary. He also noted that if new state legislation is approved, the town will be able to charge for the Fire Marshal's inspections and planned review of buildings. Also under this legislation, some buildings (e.g., storage buildings) will not have to be inspected annually.

B. O'Connell asked R. Blais how town's who do not have an on staff Fire Marshal do it? R. Blais responded that all town's have the same inspection requirements. He does not know of any town that does not have a Fire Marshal.

D. Larson noted that there are some town's that have very limited times when permis can be pulled. There is another town he knows of where electrical contractors are being required to take and turn in pictures to the Town Clerk.

R. Blais noted that Fire Marshals are required to inspect all commercial buildings and everything three family and larger. J. Clark noted that R. Blais also attends the weekly Economic Development meetings to provide advice to businesses/developers interested in coming into town.

J. Watt asked if R. Blais is comfortable with the Town Manager's budget recommendations? He responded "yes."

Senior Center- Accounts 3013/3020:

Sharon Garrard, Senior Center Director presented. She started off noting that Hebron's Dial-A-Ride driver's pay rate is one of the lowest in the area. These drivers need to have specific types of driving licenses and these employees are part-time and do not get benefits. The town has had a hard time attracting and retaining drivers.

Therefore S. Garrard is proposing a 10% pay increase in next year's budget for the three current part-time Dial-A-Ride drivers. Some of this increase will be offset by bringing the number of operational hours in line with current usage.

Under Capital Outlay she has budgeted \$300 to purchase a shared GPS unit to save gas and time. She then reported that they will be charging a Dial-A-Ride surcharge for *social trips* based on the mileage, time, and number of participants.

J. Watt reported that he knows someone who might be willing to donate a GPS unit.

S. Garrard noted that the social trip surcharge monies will be used to increase the driver's salaries.

J. Watt and M. Leichter were not in favor of charging seniors for social events. M. Leichter asked if any of their grants prohibit the Senior Center from charging? S. Garrard replied that under an upcoming grant to cover the car that brings people to medical appointments, they will not be able to charge. None of their *current* grants prevent them from charging.

J. Clark noted some additional cost savings with having someone do painting for free, a janitor at East Seals Camp Hemlocks being trained as a receptionist and a few other items.

S. Garrard reported that they average 365 one way trips a month for doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, banking, etc. Also the Dial-A-Ride policies do not have any geographic restrictions for medical appointments.

The discussion turned to the Senior Center. She noted this current fiscal year, the Program Coordinator's hours were increased to full time and the Outreach Coordinator's were decreased to part-time. She also noted that the hourly rate for the Outreach Coordinator is higher than then for the Program Coordinator. However, with these changes there is an overall reduction in expenditures of more than \$3,000 between these two positions.

In regards to the Café Line Manager position, efforts are being made to meet this obligation through federal funds with a senior community service worker in coordination through Easter Seals Camp Hemlocks. They will see a cost savings with not having to pay for janitorial services through the use of another senior community service worker.

S. Garrard also noted that they will get some savings through the installation of timed thermostats and if the HVAC system is reconfigured (part of capital outlay budget). S. Garrard has figured out a way to pay for the HVAC reconfiguration within the current budget

Finally S. Garrard reported that they need to replace their computer server. RHAM is now recommending using a De-Link Network Storage System with RHAM doing the service installation. This will save \$2,000.

The BOF asked J. Clark to find out whether the town is required to pay benefits to part-time employees who work more than 20 hours a week.

Laura Bennett, Commission on Aging Chair was also present. She noted that they had been asked why they need \$500 for travel. Over the past ten years this money has not been used but donated for the Senior Center Recognition Lunch/Brunch (food and entertainment) to thank the volunteers. It has also been used to subsidize the Christmas/Holiday party.

It was then noted what kinds of volunteer work the seniors do at the Senior Center. It was also noted how the socialization of seniors is just as important as the medical needs of the seniors. Finally S. Garrard noted how the need for Senior Center services/resources has increased and how the change in staffing has positively impacted the Senior Center.

Miscellaneous General Government:

J. Clark reported that the Region 8 Health Consortium has identified a 1% decrease in the cost of medical insurance by bundling Accidental Death and Dismemberment and Life Insurance and getting it from Blue Cross & Blue Shield. The policies are the same; the carrier is different. He needs to act on this by April 1st.

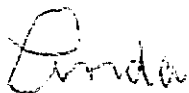
Some BOS and BOF members were not comfortable acting on this tonight because they need more time to review the background materials. It was noted that this medical insurance cost savings was *already* included in the budget. This item was tabled for next week.

M. Hazel reported that there is a draft letter the BOF is working on directed to all departments asking that all departments (including union departments) keep their wages flat. He asked the BOS if they agreed with this suggestion? The BOS will review this letter and decide if it should be done at their next meeting.

J. Watt also reported that there is another similar letter being drafted directed toward RHAM. Also that the towns of Marlborough and Andover have been asked if they too want to sign this letter to RHAM. This letter will also be reviewed at the next joint meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 p.m. The next joint meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2009.



Respectfully submitted,
Linda Bulkovitch
Board Clerk

111 Senate Brook Drive
Amston, CT 06231
March 12, 2009

Board of Finance
Board of Selectmen
Town of Hebron
Gilead Street,
Hebron, CT 06248

Dear Members of the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, and Hebron Taxpayers:

I have indisputably been to more town Commission and Board meetings than anyone of you now seated at the table. Collectively, probably not. Today is the first time I stand before any Commission or Board to discuss any issue publicly. The injustice that occurred at this past Tuesday's joint Board of Selectmen/Board of Finance meeting was so bad, I feel so compelled to bring it to your attention.

As you know, the Superintendent of our school district presented her budget. In her budget she presented all magnet school tuitions as an unfunded state mandate that will cost Hebron taxpayers \$46,000 if all of these students get in by lottery and attend next year. She represented this as a large increase to next year's school budget, using a placeholder that assumes only 7 students attend magnet schools. She also equated this dollar increase to the potential loss of a teacher.

These inaccuracies simply fueled a destructive anger and fury that needs to be quelled by the facts.

During her presentation she did not break out the pre-K magnet school tuition numbers. Also, although her presentation did present the correct numbers, at no time during her presentation did she connect the dots and point out that from a tuition perspective, it actually costs the town less to educate students in a magnet school. She also did not point out that the town also gets another cost savings by not having to pay for transporting these magnet school students to school.

That was just appalling to me as a magnet school parent and taxpayer of this town. People were misinformed and allowed to become infuriated. There were people here who should have known better and corrected this misperception.

To me, this is a win-win situation- the towns reap a savings and the student gets an excellent educational opportunity if they are so lucky to get in through lottery and their parent(s) is able to logistically transport them there.

Ironically the Hebron Board of Education prides itself every year of having one of the lowest cost/per pupil expenditures out of all the 169 towns in this state. This even lower cost should be welcomed by the Hebron Board of Education!

Additionally the Superintendent failed to educate the public that the magnet preschool programs are not traditional 5-7 hour/week preschool programs. She did not explain that these programs are in session 5 days a week from 8:15- 3 p.m. They are in session 180 days/year. Their year is divided into trimesters and they receive report cards.

In addition these students have a classroom teacher, a paraprofessional, a music teacher, an art teacher, and a gym teacher. When they are 7 years old, they will also have a language teacher.

Ironically during this past Tuesday's meeting the parent of a current Hebron kindergarten student spoke about what a wonderful school district this is and all the wonderful things her daughter is currently doing. She did not know that my 3 year old pre-K child is currently learning the same things in his program.

Time will tell whether he will actually be skipping a grade if he comes back into district thereby saving this school district additional money, never mind the known cost savings the town will continue to receive if he continues to attend magnet schools K-6. I will not ask you for any of these cost savings back.

Additionally Ms. Cruz did not provide any details on the curriculum a magnet school provides so that the value for the dollar could be defined. She herself knows that value of the education magnet schools provide. When I told her about the program at the beginning of the year she was excited and envious that my child would have such a wonderful educational opportunity noting that these programs are on the forefront of education and that all research illustrates the very positive and strong benefits of this early education. She hoped the town would also reap these benefits by continuing to support the expansion of the all day kindergarten program. However, once the bill came in, the tone changed.

This morning I met face to face with Ms. Cruz to make sure I was understanding her budget presentation correctly. She stated that she has nothing against K-6 attending magnet schools. Her concern is with being charged pre-K tuition.

I pointed out to her that no where in her presentation did she break this figure out. She lumped it together thereby creating a public fury. In addition I pointed out to her that she did not represent to the public the potential cost savings to the district for students who attend a K-6 magnet school.

I told her how she misspoke when she stated that no town pays for preschool. I pointed out that under a state mandate, the town is required to pay for preschool for special needs/education students and their 1:1 peer models. This requirement goes into effect the day the special needs child turns 3- not when the school year starts. These peer models do not pay tuition and are brought into the system at the same time the special education student turns 3.

In addition, the lottery for these preschool peers is *only* open to students who will turn 3 before the first day of school. There has also been the practice of allowing younger siblings into this program as peer models automatically. These are Board of Education policies and practices respectively.

Shouldn't this lottery be open to all mainstream preschool residents and not just those who turn 3 before the first day of school? Why do the peer models not pay tuition? Couldn't this potential cost savings be used somewhere else in the budget? If I have to pay magnet preschool tuition, shouldn't they?

I have asked the Superintendent to get me the per pupil cost break out to educate these in district preschool students. She said she will get me this information. She was not clear if the town gets any ECS or IDEA funding for this program.

I have also asked her to correct her budget and represent that she was only considering the pre-K tuition costs as an unfunded mandate to the Hebron Board of Education's bottom line. I think a legitimate comparison people should consider is how the magnet preschool costs compare to the costs associated with the town's unfunded mandated preK program.

I have also asked her to reflect the cost savings in her budget for those K-6 students who will be attending a magnet school in the fall.

She informed me that she has started the process of correcting the misperceptions by meeting with the head of the PTA and the MOMS Club yesterday.

I have also told her that I was very disappointed that Tuesday no one correctly educated the public that these preK programs are not traditional programs and that they follow a very in-depth, well defined, much higher level curriculum than a traditional preschool. They also failed to speak about the town's own mandated preschool program and correctly state the magnet schools actually cost the town less (K-6). If I was not behind the camera, I would have started the process.

I have requested specific curriculum information from my son's principal so that you can see for yourselves what they do. Unfortunately she is sick this week or I would have it for you tonight.

I have also asked the magnet school principal for information on how their programs are funded. Do they get grants? Do they get foundation monies? What assistance do they get from the state? Are their costs lower than other towns/districts because their teachers are not unionized? Are their health care costs lower?

From a value for the dollar perspective, I asked that she also share with me what accreditation the school has or is working towards? Also, what is the level of education the teaching staff has achieved- Bachelors? Masters?

I ended my conversation with the Ms. Cruz stating that I wish people would stop attacking magnet schools- they provide a quality education for less money than the towns. I wish people would just step back and learn how they are able to do this, especially in this economic environment.

I know that there are several emails going around designed to infuriate. Reader beware! These are no different from hearsay and there is a good reason why hearsay is not allowed in a court of law. Once you go down the path of misinformation, your credibility and trust are in jeopardy of being called into question.

Instead of getting infuriated, and reacting by email, writing or calling anyone, I ask that you and the public first get educated. Make sure the information you receive is complete and accurate. That all your questions are answered and that you clearly understand the issue enough that you can articulate it and stand behind your position.

The cost for magnet preschool is miniscule when you consider the unfunded mandate costs associated with having to upgrade the pumping station, fund the teacher's retirement fund, provide specialized recycling capabilities at the town transfer station, change the town's street signs or pay for revaluation. These are all slated to occur within the next five years. will cost the town millions and will not necessarily benefit everyone.

If you do not know about any of this unfunded mandates, I implore you again to get yourselves educated.

Thank you.



Linda Bulkovitch