

Testimony of Dr. Charles C. Ormsby

Member, North Andover School Committee
Adjunct Professor of Mathematics,
University of Massachusetts Lowell
64 White Birch Lane, North Andover, MA 01845

In Support of SB-20 Amendment to the Constitution Relative to State Aid to Private Institutions

Proposed Article of Amendment (SB-20)

Article XLVI of the Articles of Amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth is hereby amended by adding the following sentence to the end of section 2: In addition, nothing herein contained shall be construed to prevent the Commonwealth from making grants-in-aid to students or parents or guardians of students attending private primary and secondary schools and nothing herein shall be construed to prevent the Commonwealth from providing tax deductions or tax credits for educational expenses, including tuition, textbooks, and transportation incurred by taxpayers whose dependents attend public or private primary and secondary schools.

This proposed amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution will remove any constitutional restriction on the Massachusetts Legislature that might be interpreted to prohibit the Legislature from passing any law which would establish grants-in-aid to students or parents or guardians of students attending private primary or secondary schools. Similarly, the Legislature will be empowered, if it so chooses, to provide tax deductions or tax credits for educational expenses, including tuition, textbooks, and transportation incurred by taxpayers whose dependents attend public or private primary and secondary schools.

The genesis of the current Article XLVI's (originally XVIII, now XLVI as amended by CIII) restrictions, which are being modified by SB-20, was a political movement in the 1800s (the Know Nothing Party) to ensure that public monies were devoted entirely to the Protestant public schools and not diverted to independent schools being run for the benefit of Catholic, Scottish, German or Jewish immigrants or for freed blacks. It was and remains a legacy of a virulent anti-immigrant and anti-black movement that would be considered highly discriminatory today, especially considering the Protestant orientation of the public schools of that day.

Today, Article XLVI's language is guarded by a new special interest and for an entirely different purpose. The current effect of the existing amendment is to protect a cartel in the provisioning of publicly-funded educational services to our children. I come before you today to ask you, on behalf of the children of the Commonwealth, to free our Legislature from the restrictions of Article XLVI and to permit future Legislatures to consider a broader array of options for fostering competition in K-12 education services.

The argument for providing greater competition in the provisioning of publicly-funded educational services is compelling. It depends on just two commonly accepted and well-understood premises/propositions:

1. There is a widespread public consensus that public monies should be collected and made available to ensure that all of our children are provided the best possible educational opportunities that can be afforded, given whatever level of appropriations are made available for this purpose.

2. The most efficient mechanism for satisfying any need that involves human effort, innovation, or investment is based on free-markets and competition with consumers empowered to select and reward those who best meet their needs ... proven by hundreds (possibly thousands) of years of economic experience.

Putting these two well-understood propositions together for the benefit of our children is prevented by the existing provisions of Article XLVI, Section 2, which

SB-20 seeks to amend. Removing these provisions is blocked by special interests that seek to enjoy the exclusive and guaranteed benefits of public funding without having to compete.

The overpowering justification for passing SB-20 is made clear when you start with the premise that "public education" is intended for the benefit of the children, and only through them for the benefit of society in the long run. It is not and should not be designed with any other beneficiary in mind.

There are two steps in the overall process that are evident.

Step 1: We tax our citizens to provide us the capability to procure the best possible educational opportunities for our children.

Step 2: We must ensure that the best possible educational opportunities are procured for our children with the resources resulting from Step 1.

Nothing in human history indicates that a legislated monopoly optimizes Step 2. Only the broadest possible competition will ensure that our children are optimally served. With the current constitutional restrictions on the Legislature, senators and representatives cannot even consider ways to introduce free and open competition for the ultimate benefit of our children. This is the way the special interests like it. Such restrictions tie the hands of the Legislature and short-circuit the future of our children.

SB-20 does not prescribe any particular mechanism to introduce competition in the provisioning of educational services, whether narrowly or broadly. In fact, it doesn't even ensure that the Legislature will support the introduction of any competitive mechanisms. But it does give our elected representatives the freedom - a freedom shared by most state Legislatures - to consider such policies.

Special interests will lobby to convince this Committee that it should not have that freedom. This is because the special interests have ... guess what? ... a special interest in this matter. It is their interest that they have in mind. Not the best interests of our children.

This Committee needs to decide. Are education-related taxes collected for the benefit of special interests? Or are they collected for the benefit of our children and their future?

I respectfully ask each member of this Committee to support SB-20 and send a clear message to parents and guardians everywhere that the Commonwealth's public education resources are committed to our children's future and they are not intended, nor will they be used, as an entitlement for special interests.

Thank you for your consideration of this important constitutional amendment.

Senator Steve Baddour Leads by Example

D.J. Deeb, M.A., M.S., M.Ed.

Methuen's Democratic State Senator Steve Baddour recently announced that he will not be a candidate for Congress. The reason: He wants to be a father to his two daughters, 5-year-old Victoria and 4-year-old Isabella. While many politicians talk about family values, Senator



Baddour leads by example. Senator Baddour is truly refreshing to have as an elected official in liberal Massachusetts. Although he is a Democrat, Senator Baddour's voting record largely reflects that of a fiscal conservative and common sense thinking.

It is easy to criticize members of Congress and often the criticism is well-founded, but being a member of Congress is a very demanding and difficult job. It takes a real toll on family life. Members of Congress have to fly back and forth frequently to and from Washington, D.C. for meetings and important votes all week long. At the same time, they need to be visible in their home district all the time. In addition, they need to constantly fund-raise and campaign for re-election every two years. Thus, being a member of Congress is not an easy job, to say the least. This begs the question: Where does time exist for the family when one is in Congress?

Current Congressman Marty Meehan has been masterful at balancing the time between his responsibilities in Washington, D.C., his obligations in the district that he represents, and his home life. But now Rep. Meehan's children are getting older and he too wants to be closer to home. Thus, he accepted the position of chancellor at UMass Lowell. In my opinion as an alumnus, Rep. Meehan is a great choice for this position. He has the essential contacts and the ability to raise private donations for UMass Lowell. These

will help to make a great university even better.

In this day and age when more than half of all marriages end in divorce, when more and more children come from broken homes, it is crucial that parents make their children their top priority. In announcing that he will not be a candidate for the 5th

Congressional District, Senator Baddour stated, "Anyone can be a member of Congress. I'm the only one who can be the father of my two daughters." Well said, senator! Not only does Senator Baddour say it, he lives it. There is no question in my mind that Senator Baddour would have been a very strong contender if he had chosen to run for Congress. I'll even go as far as to say that I'm pretty sure he would have won. But, instead, Senator Baddour resisted the temptation and did the right thing by putting his family first.

I would have liked to have seen Senator Baddour run and I would have supported him for Congress. He has always supported small businesses, lower taxes, firearms ownership by law-abiding citizens, tougher crime laws, accountability for the Big Dig project, and family values. Although I am disappointed that he will not be a candidate, Senator Baddour made the right decision by choosing his family over politics.

D.J. Deeb is an adjunct Professor of History and Government at Bunker Hill Community College. He teaches Social Studies full-time at Reading Memorial High School. He is an elected member of the Dracut School Committee and Greater Lowell Regional Vocational-Technical School Committee.

SURREAL ESTATE: From Page 2

Historic buildings are potential economic catalysts. In Lawrence, sustainable developer Robert Ansin is converting the former Wood Mill into Monarch Lofts, the largest ecoluxury development in New England. Many people initially laughed at the thought of luxury condominiums in downtown Lawrence, but affluent buyers from Andover and Boston have driven the prices for some lofts above the average home price in Haverhill. At \$1.2 million, the largest lofts at Monarch are more expensive than the highest-priced homes in Haverhill. Monarch Lofts demonstrated that historic downtowns are viable, and raised the bar for future developments in Merrimack Valley.

In contrast, Haverhill has been filling its downtown with low-income housing, clinics, and shelters. Haverhill could have attracted this sort of catalytic project - a distinct, stylish development rooted in environmental principles - except that its stock of former downtown mills and factories has been largely demolished. For parking lots. Week by week, it is frustrating to see each of the distinct buildings that has the potential to improve Haverhill get converted to low-income housing or being approved for demolition.

As we move towards the next election, please consider this. The best indication of

the kind of downtown that Haverhill is building can be found in the fate of the buildings currently on the block: the churches in Lafayette Square, the Granite Street building, and the armory. In a neighborhood with a bright future, churches and armories are converted into distinct upscale residences. In towns on the decline, the architecture is ignored and the buildings are treated as commodity space to be converted into low-income housing or demolished.

All this talk of economics, urban planning and real estate development comes down to a single question: are we making downtown a place where people want to spend time? The most beloved historic places in New England - places like Cambridge, Ogunquit and Nantucket - have architectural review boards that maintain a certain look, and a master plan that ensures development serves the city's goals. By protecting the qualities that attract residents - open space, historic housing, and a lively downtown - everyone benefits: property

Constantine A. Valhoulis is a principal with The Hammersmith Group, a real estate brokerage and consulting firm that advises developers of luxury properties and civic leaders on the revival of historic downtowns. This column first appeared in The Haverhill Gazette.

In the Face of Accusation

Peter Larocque, Lawrence School Committee

One of the accusations towards the Lawrence public schools is that we are putting so much HOPE in the new Lawrence High School that is being built. Well, that is very far from the truth!



Truth be told is that our hope and confidence is in the teachers in the Lawrence High School and throughout the entire school district. Take a good look at what they have now at the Lawrence High School building.

They have an old, rundown building that is being used way beyond what it was originally designed for.

The roof leaks and the basement gets wet when it rains. Bathrooms are overworked and the cafeteria is overcrowded. The classrooms and hallways are also overcrowded. Because of the overcrowding, discipline also becomes an issue. Thus, the reason for a new high school being built! So, yes, many of these issues that deal with the physical building will be non-issues at the new high school.

But the truth of the matter is that our HOPE is that since we know that with all the faults of the old building on Haverhill St., that EDUCATION is happening! Children are learning. WHY? Because of the quality and caliber and character of the teachers of the Lawrence High School. I believe that our teachers in the entire Lawrence public school system are second to none! They are asked to do miracles day after day with little to no parent involvement! But they show up the next day for work and for that I am very thankful and proud to stand by them.

Now take these same teachers and place them in a new facility and new learning environment and a ratio of 1 to 20. You tell me what's going to happen!

Six new high schools being built on one campus. The new Lawrence High School campus will have a college atmosphere that all Lawrence parents who send their children to Lawrence public schools will be proud of. If I sound excited about this wonderful opportunity for the children of Lawrence, it is because I am!

So is my HOPE in a building? My answer to that is that I am excited about the new buildings, but my HOPE is in the teachers and students who will occupy those new buildings on the new Lawrence High School campus. My expectations are high, my goals are clear, the future of the students in the new Lawrence High School is bright!

So if we can get all us adults on the same page and show our children in Lawrence that, yes, we can work together. That their EDUCATION is important to all of us, then maybe all of our HOPES and GOALS can become reality!

Peter Larocque is a member of the Lawrence School Committee. He was elected by the Lawrence City Council to fill the unexpired term of Amy McGovern. You can email him at pamelalarocque@hotmail.com

Councilor Gosselin Gets Free City Services

day. These pallets came from the DPW yard, the pallets were city property. In 2006, Mrs. (sic) Gosselin wanted these pallets so that she could move items off the floor of her basement or garage because of some water issues." The originator of the complaint goes on to state, "my basement floods during heavy spring rains and I do not ask for nor get free help and supplies from DPW. The fact that DPW personally delivered these articles to her house is even worse."

The Valley Patriot obtained internal DPW documents this week showing that in August of 2006, Lawrence DPW Supervisor Andrea Traficante ordered John Isensee, a DPW foreman, to go to Gosselin's East Gilbert St. home to perform the allegedly illegal services.

"On or about August 20th I was asked by Andrea Traficante to provide service to a home on East Gilbert St.," one report states (see reports opposite page). "... the work provided was A) bring two pallets, B) trim tree around light C) remove pieces of wood, stockade fence, these jobs were completed within two days."

Councilor Gosselin's private home is the only house on East Gilbert Street in South Lawrence which is located off of South Broadway near the Andover Line.

Another incident report written by a DPW worker whose name was blacked out, states that DPW foreman John Isensee ordered a subordinate to leave two additional wooden pallets at the home of the South Lawrence councilor on a different date. This report states "I (name deleted) delivered pallets to East Gilbert St. on August 22nd, per order of my foreman John I., put pallets *on her property*."

When contacted by The Valley Patriot to confirm the authenticity of the DPW incident reports, DPW supervisor Joe Viel said that the reports were, in fact, authentic and that the work done at Councilor Gosselin's home as detailed in the reports was "only the tip of the iceberg."

"From my conversations with our workers and from personal experience, I can tell you that this particular councilor calls DPW on a regular basis, not for her constituents, but for herself," Viel said.

Additional documents obtained by The Valley Patriot show work orders on East Gilbert St. precipitated by phone calls from the councilor to DPW supervisors and the city yard to have her street swept several times per month and pot holes filled out of rotation. Documents show that on February 6th, May 1st, June 20th, June 26th, June 27th, July 11th, and November 6th of last year, Gosselin had a DPW street sweeper clean East Gilbert Street.

Work orders from the Department of Public Works also show that DPW workers picked up yard waste from her private property on February 6, 2006 at the same time Gosselin was having her street swept by city workers. "Councilor Gosselin's house is the only house on East Gilbert Street, and it is one of the smallest streets in the city," Viel said. "The time our workers have spent over there in the last year or so alone could have been much better spent taking care of the street issues of her constituents. But when a city councilor calls for something, the standard has always been that whatever councilors want councilors get. They approve our budget and saying no is not an option."

Viel also contends that during the much-complained-about snowstorm last month, Gosselin complained publicly at a City Council meeting that the DPW didn't do a good enough job plowing the streets. He added, "During that snow storm I got several calls from Councilor Gosselin and none of them were to complain about the condition of the streets in her district. You know why she was calling us? She was in a play over on Island Street and she wanted to make sure the street and sidewalks were plowed and the snow was removed so people could park during the snow storm to see her perform. While we were taking care of her personal issues, our trucks could have been plowing some of those streets she was so quick to accuse us of not plowing well enough. She said after the fact that she got all these calls from constituents complaining about how terrible the streets were plowed, but Councilor Gosselin never once called me or anyone else to pass along that information. The only thing we ever heard about from her was taking care of Island Street for her play."

Island Street is not in Councilor Gosselin's district.

This isn't the first time Gosselin has been accused of using the Lawrence DPW as her own personal home improvement crew. In 2002, Gosselin was fined by the Ethics Commission for having DPW workers remove and dispose of construction debris and hazardous material from her investment property on Shattuck St. At the time, Gosselin first denied reports that she had been taking advantage of her position as an elected official to get free city services. "It's an absolute lie," Gosselin said when confronted by a Rumbo reporter. "It never happened and I refuse to discuss this any further," she continued, adding a few expletives to the reporter who questioned her.

But when DPW workers came forward to confirm that Gosselin had indeed demanded they fill two trucks full of construction debris and dispose of it at no charge to her, the Massachusetts Ethics Commission issued Gosselin a fine resulting in a public apology by Gosselin who then claimed she didn't know what she had done was illegal.

The most recent complaint filed against Gosselin details how she not only received free services from the city of Lawrence, but that it was her public behavior at City Council meetings that led to the complaint being filed.

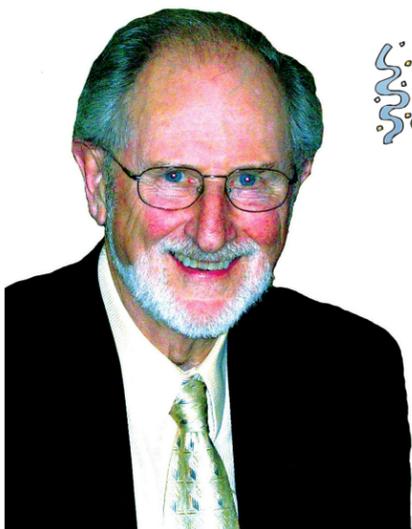
The complaint states: "When I saw her on TV yelling at the mayor and defending DPW and the DPW boss, I had enough (sic). Of course Councilor Gosselin is defending the DPW boss, she is getting anything she wants for property for free! It is like she has a Home Depot credit card but the only time the bill comes due is when the ethics commission fines her. I am not trying to get the average DPW worker in trouble, but I am sick of city councilors getting special treatment that as a citizen I cannot get. It is not right! This happens because Councilor Gosselin is abusing her role as an elected official."

Embattled DPW director Frank McCann was not implicated in any of the documents obtained by The Valley Patriot and all of the workers we interviewed for this report stated that McCann, himself was not directly involved in providing these alleged services to the South Lawrence councilor.

For copies of additional documents and updates on this story visit our website at www.valleypatriot.com

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JUST 2 DPW INCIDENT REPORTS ON FREE SERVICES GIVEN TO MARIE GOSSELIN



**Department of Public Works
Incident Report**

Personal Injury yes no Separate Report Filed: yes no

Date: 3/26/07 Time: 8:00 AM

To: Supervisor Joe Viel

From: John Teseo Foreman

Nature of Incident: Work Request

Page 1 of 1

On or about August 20th I was asked by Andrea Trappicchio provided service to a home on East Gilbert Street, the work provided was A) Bring two pallets B) Trim tree around Light C) Remove pieces of wood Stockade fence. Those jobs were completed within two days.



**Department of Public Works
Incident Report**

Personal Injury yes no Separate Report Filed: yes no

Date: AUGUST 22 Time: 1:00 PM

To: _____

From: _____

Nature of Incident: _____

Page _____ of _____

I delivered Pallets to East Gilbert Street on August 22 Per order of my foreman John T. Put Pallets on her property.

Signed: _____ Date: 3-26-07

Foreign Film Festival at Northern Essex Community College

You don't have to travel to Cannes to enjoy a foreign film festival. Northern Essex Community College will host its Tenth Annual Foreign Film Festival Saturday nights, April 7, 14, and 21, in Lawrence.

This year's screenings will showcase critically acclaimed foreign language films from Spain, Germany, and Korea. All films are subtitled in English.

The screenings, which are free and open to the public, will be shown at the Amesbury St. campus, located at 82 Amesbury Street in Lawrence across the street from the Buckley Parking garage. Security is on site and parking is free in the campus parking lot located behind the building. Light refreshments will be served.

The schedule of films is as follows:

Saturday, April 7 at 8 p.m. - *The Sea Inside (Mar Adentro)* (Spain 2004, Rated PG-13, running time 125 minutes). Based on the true story of Ramon Sampedro, who fought a 30-year campaign to end his own life, this film rekindled a ferocious political and ethical debate in Spain over euthanasia. *The Sea Inside* explores Ramon's relationship with his family- and with the two women who love him; Julia, his attorney, and Rosa, who desperately wants to teach him that life is worth the struggle despite the failure to find love and emotional security in her own life. While the film skillfully avoids a descent into saccharine sentimentality or the emotional excesses of a soap opera, in the end, Ramon's wisdom and bravery deliver a lesson about the meaning of human life. Directed by Alejandro Amenabar, starring Javier Bardem and Belen Rueda, this film was the Winner of the Academy Award as best foreign language film of 2004.

Saturday, April 14 at 8 p.m. - *The Edukators* (Germany 2004, Rated R, running time 127 minutes). Three young political activists develop their own style of confronting economic injustice; they break into the McMansions of the super rich, rearranging furniture and belongings, enjoying food and expensive liquors, and - while not stealing anything- leaving notes behind about the absurdity and decadence of the homeowners' lifestyles, crediting the "Edukators" with the invasion. When the

three are eventually surprised by one of the homeowners, a wealthy businessman with a radical past, the Edukators take him hostage, setting the stage for a clash of generations and ideologies. Directed by Hans Weingartner and starring Burghart Klausner, Daniel Bruhl, Julia Jentsch, Stipe Erceg - this thought provoking and brilliantly conceived film earned a rousing 15-minute standing ovation at its official premiere at the Cannes Film Festival.

Saturday, April 21 at 8 p.m. - *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring* (Korea 2004, Rated R, running time 103 minutes). Captivating and deeply spiritual film about two Buddhist monks living in a temple floating on Jusan Pond, surrounded by forested mountains. One of the monks is an adult, while the other begins the film as a child. The story progresses from season to season, the years pass as if in a dream, and the child monk becomes a man. A beautiful, but troubled woman seeking refuge from the world enters the temple, and she and the young monk begin a love affair, which marks his fall from innocence to experience. Ty Burr of the Boston Globe called it "as spare and unvarnished as a wooden temple floating on a lake, but its reflections run deep, and it can ripple your thoughts for months." Directed by Ki-duk Kim, and starring Oh Young-soo and Kim Jong-ho, this film was the Audience Award winner at the San Sebastian International Film Festival.

For more information contact NECC Professor Mark Palermo at 978-556-7463 or mpalermo@necc.mass.edu, or check the website at <http://neccfilmfest.tripod.com>.

With campuses in Haverhill and Lawrence and extension sites in Andover, Methuen, and North Andover, Northern Essex Community College is a state-assisted college, offering over 70 associate degree and certificate programs as well as hundreds of non credit courses designed for personal enrichment and career growth. Close to 13,000 students ranging from recent high school graduates to workers employed locally attend classes days, evenings, and weekends. Northern Essex is the only state college located in the lower Merrimack Valley Region of Massachusetts.

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N.A. Police Officers and Firefighters Need Your Help



Ted Tripp

Let's say you're sound asleep in the upstairs' bedroom and you are awakened by the sound of someone breaking into your house. You call 911. You want the police to respond as soon as possible. But it takes forever for them to reach your home.

It's 6:00 a.m. and as you look over at your neighbor's house you see smoke coming from

the basement. You call 911. The firefighters are late arriving. You rush out to alert your neighbors.

Your 88-year-old mother thinks she's having a heart attack. You call 911. You are frantic while waiting for the ambulance and wonder what's taking so long.

These scenarios are all real possibilities if the school spending zealots get their way at the May town meeting and gut the budgets for police and fire protection. As you read this column, they are in the process of collecting the signatures of their supporters and urging them to attend town meeting and vote for a school budget that is \$2.9 million more than the town can afford.

If that additional money is approved, it will have to come from somewhere else in the budget. I suppose we could shut down the senior center, the library or the youth center - maybe even close the department of public works - but somehow I don't think these steps will be taken. So the only logical place for this money to come from is public safety - fire and police.

There is absolutely no question that such a cut will mean significantly fewer police officers and firefighters to respond to emergencies. Everybody in town will suffer the impact.

But the arrogant supporters of unlimited spending for the schools don't care. They don't care about the town. They don't care about anybody but themselves. Everybody else be damned!

The nearby flyer was distributed around town just before the March 27th election. Notice the alarmist tone of the unnamed author who was too cowardly to sign his or her name. You can also see the superior attitude of the writer. He or she *knows* better than you. You *have* to vote for the schools' designated candidate and you *have* to vote for the schools' "restoration" budget.

Especially note the next to last sentence under Item 2. In case you have trouble reading the text, it says "Our best chance of gaining their [Finance Committee and Selectmen] support is their clear understanding that we will be at town meeting in great enough numbers to take the money as we see fit if they don't provide a better way."

"Take the money as we see fit." Pure arrogance. Not much more has to be said. Please come to town meeting and help prevent the out-of-control school spending zealots from decimating our police, fire and emergency services.

Ted Tripp is an International Consultant in high-tech manufacturing methods. He has BS and MS degrees in Chemical Engineering from MIT. He is also the head of the N.A. Taxpayer's Association. You can reach him at tripp@gis.net.

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PARENTS

The Fate of the North Andover School System is Truly in your Hands

No, you can't squeeze equitable Chapter 70 funding from the State or forces them to roll back the many unfunded mandates. No, you can't stop spiraling healthcare and energy costs that make keeping to a 2 ½ % increase impossible. And you probably can't influence an amazing new industrial player into the old Lucent plant to bring in new tax revenues. But that's ok. Because you do have more power than you probably realize. In just 3 steps you can have a dramatic impact in the schools for the upcoming year.

1) Vote for Chris Allen for School Committee on March 27th

Chris is a one of those tireless, informed volunteers who has devoted countless hours supporting the schools. She is ready to roll up her sleeves and work for the kids. She deserves your vote. Her main opponent, Don Stewart, is very popular with both seniors and NATA supporters. When asked about accreditation at the recent League of Women Voters debate, Stewart responded, "Accreditation is just a word. If parents want to send their kids to an accredited high school they can send their kids to Lawrence." If you'll be out of town, get to town hall NOW and vote by absentee ballot. Make sure every parent, every registered voter in your house gets to the polls! You don't want to wake up on March 28th with Don Stewart on the school board for the next 3 years. And that's precisely what will happen if parents sit home.

2) Sign the Petition Supporting the School Restoration Budget

Town meeting would be much easier with a reasonable school funding plan from the Finance Committee and Selectmen that supports all of our needs and is not dependent on any post town meeting action (like an override or special town meeting) like last year. Our best chance of gaining their support is their clear understanding that we will be at town meeting in great enough numbers to take the money as we see fit if they don't provide a better way. The petition demonstrates our strong support.

3) Every Parent at Town Meeting on May 14th. No excuses.

That's NOT one parent from every household. We need BOTH of you. So line up your sitters now. Seriously. Is town meeting long, at times boring, and sometimes confusing? Absolutely! It's also the most important night you will spend this year for your child! The most important.

You spend countless hours in your kids' classroom and at plays, teacher conferences and PTO meetings. You drive miles upon miles carpooling to extracurricular activities to round out their education. Now it's time to spend an evening making sure the school's partial program restorations are funded.

It's the difference between an accredited high school or not. The difference between class sizes in the high-twenties or mid- to high-thirties. It's Foreign Language and Tech Ed in the middle school or not. Open libraries or not. A principal at every school or not. Curriculum to better prepare students for MCAS high stakes testing or a continued erosion of test scores. **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

If you want to take one more step, pass this message to every North Andover parent in your email address book and get this flyer into as many hands as you can.

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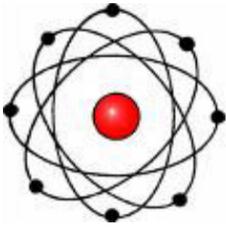
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Inquiry Based Science: Dr. Ormsby From Page 3

multiplication to some students while teaching division to others, and fractions to their most advanced students.

When it comes time for English Language Arts (read'n & write'n), they must simultaneously teach basic reading skills to some while discussing the classics with others.



Of course, they can't actually do these things simultaneously, so they have to break up the class into more homogeneous groups and then split their time among the groups. Now students who could have had the teacher's attention for the whole class, can only get it for a portion of the class time. Brilliant!

Since the teacher splits the class up to make the sub-groups more similar in achievement level, one might ask, "WHY DIDN'T THEY DO THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE?" What were they thinking?

La piece de resistance is, of course, fuzzy math. Here the education gurus outdid themselves. They didn't just make the subject more difficult by, for instance, deciding not to teach the code or raising the level of distraction by removing classroom walls. Nor did they combine students at different levels of achievement in the same classroom to dilute teacher effectiveness. Instead, they decided to NOT TEACH THE BASIC SUBJECT AT ALL!

Yes, in fuzzy math the curriculum just leaves out the basic methods for multiplication and division and refuses to teach students how to work with arbitrary fractions. Instead, fuzzy math encourages dependence on calculators so that you will not need to understand the fundamentals

of mathematics. It would be the same as giving French students a pocket translator instead of having them learning vocabulary. I better be careful, I may give them ideas.

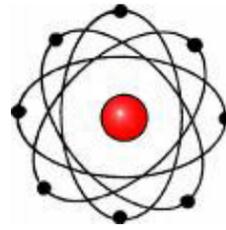
All of these hair-brained schemes had the backing of august education associations or academies or councils. Whether it was the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) that championed fuzzy math, or some other education association, every failed education initiative had impressive backing. What they failed to have was any common sense review. Teaching at the K-12 level is not rocket science and never needed to be re-invented. Just teach the code. Encourage kids to focus. Actually teach the subject you are supposed to teach.

Unfortunately, the education gurus are busy coming up with new ideas all the time.

Now we're being told that students shouldn't be taught science based on a rigorous and methodical foundation of facts and concepts, and based on an integrating mathematical framework coupled with directed experimentation. Instead, they should be free to "inquire" and learn science by "observing and recording their thoughts" about everyday experiences ... including the always-present social ramifications.

For those who have spent time investigating "fuzzy math," you will be aware that it is also described as "constructivist" or "discovery-based." What this means is that the teachers didn't teach the basic concepts of mathematics, they let the students "construct" them or "discover" them by themselves.

If you don't smell this same philosophy lurking behind "inquiry-based" science instruction, your olfactory senses are dysfunctional.



Like mathematics, science understanding must be built on a carefully laid and integrated foundation of concepts, terminology, and methods, plus the addition of experimental results (performed or described) and, in many instances, mathematical models. It cannot be gained via a haphazard collection of disconnected experiences and poorly integrated or ill-defined concepts cooked up in the brains of uneducated students.

Let me warn you. Like the other disastrous schemes outlined above, inquiry-based science is supported by influential education groups such as the National Science Teachers Association and the National Research Council.

An outline of this philosophy is provided in the National Science Education Standards promulgated in 1996. The goal of this approach is to establish "Science standards for all students. The phrase embodies both excellence and equity. The Standards apply to all students, regardless of age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disabilities, aspirations, or interest and motivation in science."

You get the flavor.

A well-written critique of this inquiry-based standard is provided by Professor Alan Cromer, Department of Physics, Northeastern University, in his paper "Science Standards: An Update." For the full paper go to <http://www.mathematicallycorrect.com/cromer.htm>. Here is just one excerpt from his critique:

As another example of inquiry, the Massachusetts Science and Technology Curriculum Framework (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1995) outlines a unit entitled "How Do Objects Fly?" "Middle school students' study of flight begins with building and informally testing different types of gliders. Students explore features that make flight possible . . . "The students then go on to pursue further inquiries based on their own questions, such as "What impact does air traffic have on people and organisms in communities near an airport?"

The difference between this "inquiry" and a scientific investigation of flight couldn't be starker. The distinctions among a projectile, a glider, and powered flight are never made, or even suggested. There is no inquiry into lift, or Bernoulli's principle. Nothing about these critical matters can be learned from "informally testing different types of gliders." Middle school students can't make any meaningful inquiry into the impact of air traffic; all they can do is read about complaints of abutters and environmentalists.



Who decides that this sort of reading is compatible with inquiry in science, but that structured experiments on pressure and Bernoulli's principle are not? What contribution does reading about complaints of airplane noise make to a student's understanding of how airplanes fly? It merely allows a social science exercise to disguise as a science exercise. This is the true meaning of "real world phenomena."

Inquiry-based science instruction is the educators' sequel to whole-word reading, open classrooms, fuzzy math, and "let's make believe everyone is the same." If you liked these, you'll love inquiry-based science.

Our children trust us to give them the proper tools to learn and achieve. These are precious opportunities that must not be squandered. We can't let them down once again.

Inquiry-based science is a Trojan horse that can and will displace real and substantial science curricula where it is adopted. We better look this "gift horse" in the mouth - it is no gift and it has no teeth.

Dr. Ormsby is a member of the North Andover School Committee. He is a graduate of Cornell and has a doctorate from MIT. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact Dr. Ormsby via email: ccormsby@comcast.net

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North Andover

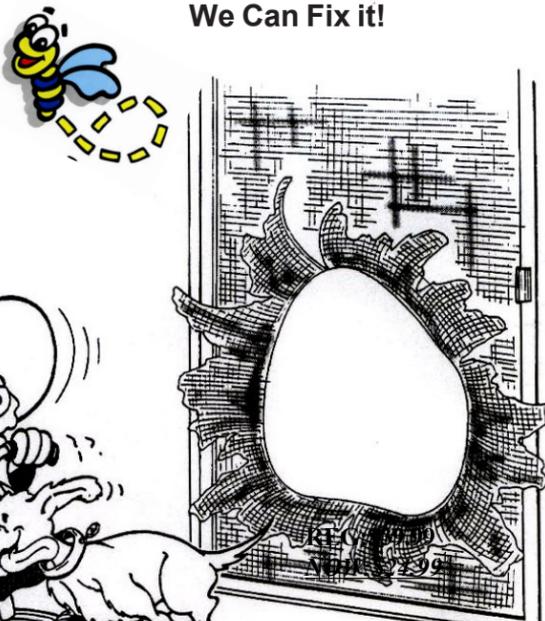
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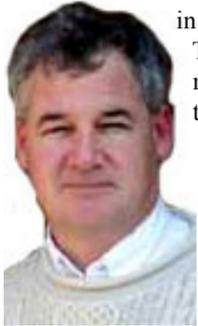
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Chasing the Holy Grail

Georgetown Assessment & Troubling Mistakes

Georgetown Selectman Lonnie Brennan



There's good news for almost everyone in town this month, but not so in taxes. The Finance Advisory Board has been meeting and the "O" word has been tossed around a lot. Override, that is. Hefty tax increases in the future, or the gift that keeps on taking. But for now, let's start with a brief follow-up on our current tax bills.

Last month, this column reflected the first initial blush at some tax assessment information unearthed recently, and while some might take offense to printing questions and data and charts, I've always believed it's best to kick the hornet's nest and get things out in the open to discuss. It can be uncomfortable for many (including the kicker), but you can never tell where it will truly lead.

"We Made a Mistake"

Subsequent to that column, I met with our assistant assessor/office manager and asked him why certain properties had such wide changes in tax assessments (plus 15% for someone, minus 15% for someone else??), and specifically asked why a house owned by an assessor's daughter stood out as having dropped so dramatically in value.

The short answer: "there were some errors made."

In this case, it appears we can blame Charlie. You see, Charlie works for an outside assessing firm which the town hired to help expedite a state-required re-certification process this past year. Time constraints were high and in the rush, we got "quantity, not quality." Charlie went around town and made his notes and gave his inputs as requested. But in the process, he made some "changes."

I pulled out a ruler to measure the nearly 4-inch-tall stack of paper (estimated anywhere from 800 to perhaps 1,000 potential changes/errors) presented on the conference table: redlines/notes/changes/errors. By way of reference, there are 2,388 single-family dwellings in town.

Fellow taxpayer, I must confess it was more than I could digest in one sitting. Staggering - the sheer volume of work required to examine these changes. I started wondering: What was Charlie thinking? How did he look at one of the elected Board of Assessor's daughter's house, a house with a balcony deck out back on the second-floor, overlooking a golf course, on nearly two acres of land, and change its classification to a "ranch"? A wrong classification that needed to be fixed and corrected, I was told.

Clearly, there's a lot of work needed now to troll through Charlie's work. Most of the changes are perhaps "minor" and won't affect your tax bill, perhaps. And a lot of the things might not be errors at all. It might be good work by Charlie, and there's no sense in condemning him for a few (?) errors. But, my suggestion: if you received an increase higher than 6% this year, ask the assessor one question: have you changed my house style or the number of stories in my home in your assessment this past year? If the answer is yes, you know what to do! I'll tell you one thing. If you

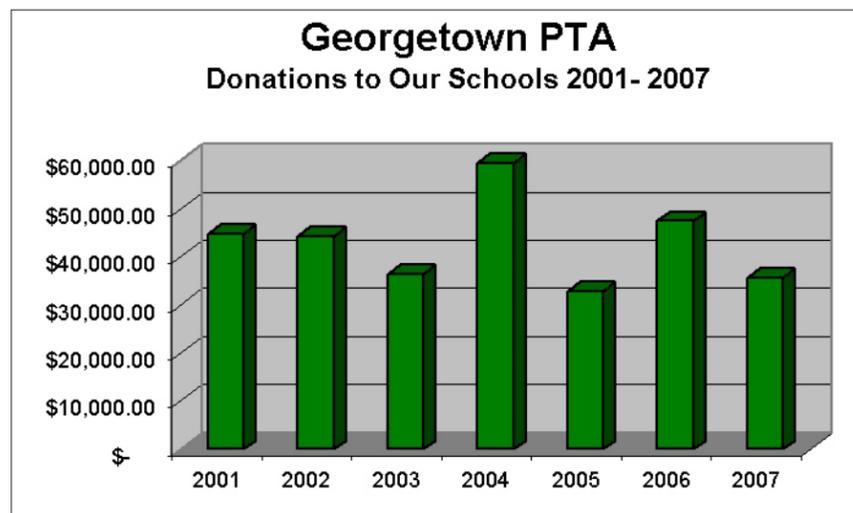
received a decrease in excess of 6%, folks will be looking at ya.

I'll keep kicking this nest. There appears to be more things to learn and it will be interesting to see what corrections are to be made.

Where's the Budget?

Want to learn about the proposed requests by the various town departments for next year's budget? Proposed new hires, dramatically changing hours and corresponding salaries (changing a part-timer to a full-timer), etc.? Well, as of this printing you still cannot get any information from the Finance Advisory Board's websites. Really.

I asked if the board would share the draft budget proposals with you, the taxpayers, by posting these drafts



on its websites (it has an official town website, and recently the board started its own private website). The answer: NO!

Actually, for full disclosure, the answer wasn't just no, it was a very vocal FinCom member Sandy Gerraughty admonishing me and calling it "irresponsible" to post any draft budgets online, as I have done at www.GeorgetownToday.com. I attempted to explain the benefits of allowing folks to "play along at home" by reading the budgets which are sometimes discussed when they televise some of their meetings (hey, at least some of their meetings get televised now, a big improvement from prior years), and that getting the information out there, in the public eye, for folks to see the draft can only help. No. No. No was the answer.

So, I posted the new budget online again via wireless card connection, before leaving their meeting. Being a selectman has one privilege: the Advisory Board can't deny me access to the information, and what I get, you'll get.

She Said She Said?

Not sure what to add about the exchange between FinCom member Sandy Gerraughty and our Library Director Ruth Eiffert. What should have been a simple exchange of information ended up with FinCom member Tim Rhu seemingly apologizing to Ms. Eiffert for the rough treatment by a couple of his fellow board-mates.

Here's how it went:

Sandy: I guess, Ruth, I have a question for you. Two years ago when you came before the FinCom, in regards to looking for the library, we specifically asked you what your anticipation was for increases in operating expenses.

Ruth: Yup.

Sandy: And you said you didn't anticipate any increases in operating expenses.

Ruth: No. No, I did not.

Sandy: Now, we've got ... and we asked you if you could operate your library based on the current operating budget as it stood two years ago and you said, yes, you could.

Ruth: No, I did not say that.

Sandy: Yes, you did.

Ruth: No. No.

Sandy: It's just that...

Ruth: From the moment I approached this committee, every year that I have presented this budget to this committee ... I have consistently asked for an increase ... You certainly would be remiss to actually admit that you wouldn't need any more staffing or you wouldn't need any more operating expenses for a new larger library.

And on it went until Ruth referenced at least three prior meetings where she had presented a proposed increase. Subsequent to this meeting, Ruth and Laura Zalewski, chair of the library board of trustees, presented documentation and references from at least five prior public meetings and presentations to the town and boards to

prove their consistency. "You cannot go from a 4,000 square feet building into a 16,000 square foot building and not have more utilities," Ruth explained. "It's just impossible." Perhaps, if we can get more budget data and drafts and projection up on websites and such, we can avoid she said/she said moments in the future?

Can I Sell You a Bridge?

I would be remiss myself to not mention that at this same FinCom meeting they chose to leave the Bailey Lane Culvert Crossing closed. And when our town administrator presented his request for \$5,500 to get emergency access through that area (police, ambulances), and stated that he had worked with our highway guy on the numbers, our highway guy told the FinCom, "I didn't come prepared tonight to talk about this. I don't have my file with me." He then went on to object to the opening, as he has in the past, instead seeking a complete re-build of the area to the tune of \$60K in engineering work and perhaps \$200K in construction work. The culvert crossing spans 12 feet and is approximately four feet above the mud. In March, an ambulance got lost down at the dead end at 1:22 a.m. one morning. Confused that we now have three Bailey Lanes, Upper, Middle, and Lower, the driver got stuck. Human error. We're told it wasn't an emergency, just a taxpayer on Mohawk Circle waiting to get ambulance transport to the hospital. Poor Mohawk Circle. Tick, tick, at least a 5-minute delay as the ambulance was misdirected.

PTA: Sometimes It Is About the Money

And on a much more positive and happy note, over the past seven years the PTA has contributed more than \$300,000 to our schools. This is extra money contributed by donors and those who support the various PTA fundraisers and events.

We've been blessed with the hard work and leadership of the executive board. Hats off to PTA President Lisa Woodford, Amy Purcell, Heidi Garozzo, and our long-time Treasurer Robin O'Malley who will be stepping down after years of tremendous service. Everyone extends the greatest of thanks to you, Robin.

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