

Letter to the Editor: Gross Negligence and/or Stupidity

What would you think if I told you that I planned to spend over \$20 million to renovate the inside of a building but was NOT going to replace the leaky roof? You would probably think it was a stupid decision and I was throwing good money after bad, right?

Well, this is just what our wonderful school administration and board of education has done. Hold on to your pocketbooks! 290 Brighton Road needs a new roof and the cost to taxpayers is \$500,000. It seems that even though they knew the roof was leaking (as evidenced by several change of work orders for roof repairs), someone decided NOT to replace the roof. The only part of the roof of 290 Brighton Road which is new is the part which was raised to build the gym. The rest of the roof must be replaced and the school board is looking to bundle this \$500,000 with other building repairs into another \$5 million voter referendum. This is gross negligence and stupidity at its highest degree!

Taxpayers should demand some truthful answers! Who is at fault? Did the architects and engineers inform the school board that the roof was needed? If so, why wasn't this cost included in the total cost of the referendum? Who decided not to replace the roof? Where's the oversight? If the architects and engineers did not determine that a new roof was needed, why not? Wasn't it was a leaky roof which damaged the sheetrock? Was this another detail that somehow the board failed to tell the Office of Schools Facility Department? Will taxpayers ever be told the exact cost of this project including all the cost overruns? Why hasn't the school board provided the Division of Finance and Office of School Facilities the complete list of the costs of all the change of work orders for 290 as required by the State Audit Report?

The Clifton City Council has the authority to call for an independent audit of the school board's spending just as the mayor and council did in Paramus after the spending debacle with the soil contamination at the school in Paramus. How much more taxpayer money will the Council allow the board to waste? Let's not forget the missing \$850,000 that was earmarked for the high school auditorium renovations or the \$\$ thousands recently spent to defend the bogus Traier lawsuit to reinstate the two ex-attorneys or the 7%-8% raises given to non-affiliated school personnel built into the "bare bones budget" or the \$1.2 million taken out of surplus to pay for the cost overruns on 290 Brighton Road or the \$3-4 million cost overruns on this project and the over \$300,000 in bogus ethics charges (which could have been recouped under the errors and omissions policy if D'Elia had filed the claim in a timely fashion). The Council can not close their eyes and ears to this wasteful spending any longer.

Taxpayers must demand accountability and transparency from all our elected officials. It is the responsibility of all our elected officials to protect taxpayer funds and to speak out against wasteful spending and mismanagement by other elected officials. This is gross

negligence and stupidity on part of the school board for spending almost \$20 million (remember we still have not received the \$4 million grant money for 290 and the board had to borrow this money to complete the project) and not protecting their investment with the installation of a new roof. It is time the Council puts aside their individual stances on 290 and their personal friendships with certain school board commissioners and takes a stand on behalf of the taxpayers of Clifton. The voices of the people need to be heard!

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