

## Letter to the Editor: Pinocchio Takes Center Stage at BOE Meetings

Here's the definition of "a lie" – a type of deception in the form of an untruthful statement, especially with the intention to deceive others often with the further intention to maintain a secret or reputation or to avoid a punishment. To lie is to state something that one knows to be false or that one does not honestly believe to be true with the intention that a person will take it for the truth. In the story of Pinocchio, his nose grows longer each and every time he tells a lie. Isn't it a shame that in real life the same thing couldn't happen to people who lie?

The story of Pinocchio continues at the Clifton Board of Education Meetings and in fact, we have several "Pinocchio" characters with starring roles. At the November BOE meeting in response to questions from the public if in fact it was true that 290 Brighton Road Annex needed a new roof, Karen Perkins announced that the building would need a new roof and the cost would be \$500,000. She also stated that the warranty on the roof had expired due to the construction delays caused by the 17 meetings of the Zoning Board. She also stated that when the BOE purchased the building (in 2005) there were 5 years left on the warranty which has now expired. Several board members like Norman Tahan, John Traier and Kim Renta echoed her remarks that the warranty had expired due to the delays caused by the Zoning Board.

In a Nov 17<sup>th</sup> letter to a resident who had filed an OPRA request for a copy of the warranty on the roof at 290 Brighton Road, Karen Perkins wrote the warranty was in the possession of the ex- BOE attorney and ex-BOE architect and she was waiting to get a copy of the warranty from these individuals and the OPRA request would be fulfilled when she receives the warranty from them.

At the Dec 9<sup>th</sup> BOE meeting, residents questioned whether in fact these was a warranty and if it was transferred from the previous owner to the BOE at the time of sale and further questioning by Commissioner Joe Yeaman led Karen Perkins to announce that there was no warranty as it had never been transferred to the BOE. This was after Commissioner Traier told the public that there was only 3 years left on the warranty when they purchased the building and Commissioner Tahan tried to tell the public the whole warranty issue was a moot point since it had expired.

Warranty – no warranty. There was 5 years left on the warranty – there was only 3 years left on the warranty. The warranty expired – who cares it is a moot point. As you can see Pinocchio is alive and well at the Clifton BOE.

Here are some things I have uncovered. First, look at the Contract for Sale of 290 Brighton Road dated May 10, 2005. On page 1, in #2c) under the description of the Property it states that it includes all permits and licenses pertaining to the ownership, operation, maintenance or use of the Premises as described on Exhibit D and referred collectively as the "Permits". While Exhibit D is entitled "Permits – Pfister Maintenance, Inc Warranty for Commercial Roofing" the page is blank.

Calls were placed to Pfister Maintenance, Inc. who confirmed their records referenced the Property as "310 Brighton Road" since the two buildings 310 and 290 were connected when they were owned by Mayer Textile. Pfister confirmed that the roof warranty was issued by the manufacturer not by Pfister and that in order for the warranty to be valid, it would have to be transferred to the new owner (Clifton BOE) at the time of sale.

Pfister confirmed that this transfer never took place so in fact the Clifton BOE never had a warranty on the roof at 290 Brighton Road.

Is this a moot point? I think not. Remember, the BOE purchased and stored sheetrock and electrical equipment in 290 Brighton Road since 2006. Remember it was the leaking roof which damaged the sheetrock and caused the mold and mildew to grow on the stored sheetrock. The roof would have been repaired at no cost to Clifton taxpayers. Furthermore, were any inspections done on the property before the purchase? If not, why not? Remember, the BOE paid \$5 million for this property, well above the market and appraised value! Who is responsible for not transferring over the warranty? Was it D'Elia, the BOE attorney at the time or was it Nam Kim Park, the BOE architect and project manager? The Clifton taxpayers need answers.

What is clear is that the Business Administrator chose to lie to Clifton residents and taxpayers. Why? What is she afraid of? How many other lies has she told the public? How can public ever believe another word that comes out of her mouth? How about the other commissioners who also contributed to this lie about the roof? Can the public ever trust them again? Remember, these people are responsible for \$150 million of taxpayer funds!

Clifton residents must demand honesty and accountability from both their elected officials and public employees. Lying undermines the public's trust and belief in these officials. These officials lose all their creditability. Clifton voters must continue to clean house in the next BOE election in April 2010.

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