

Letter to the Editor: Three into One

It is truly amazing to me that the Clifton Board of Education publicly professes to be open and transparent yet continues to operate under the veil of secrecy. Here's another example. The BOE has combined three very important committees into one committee. I'm speaking about the Finance/Facilities/Athletic Committee which consists of three members (Gagnon, Traier and Tahan). Yet the BOE maintains other separate committees like the Policy, Education, Residency, and Community Relations Committees all of which are separate and each committee has three different members. Additionally, this BOE eliminated the Personnel Committee. All in the vane of openness and transparency, right?

Why would the BOE combine these three separate committees into one? Here's why. When these committees were separate, each consisted of three different board members. So that information flowed through all nine members of the board. With the combination of these three committees into one the information now is confined to only three board members.

Why is this important? Remember Ex- Commissioner Mary Kowal's departing comments. Let me quote some of her remarks. "I have asked numerous questions concerning expenditures and lately the transfer of funds.... Many times my questions were met with resistance. On many occasions the response to my inquiries was we will check it out or it already went through the finance committee and the committee was satisfied with spending the money". It's all about the money, not about our kids!

Almost a year later, we find Mary Kowal's words more pertinent today than they were then. The majority of the money spent by the BOE originates out of the Finance/Facilities/Athletic Committee. Take your pick of recent issues with the board's cash flow and spending – 290 Brighton Road, depleting the surplus to a dangerously low level, constant change of work orders on 290, contract negotiations with the unions, moldy sheetrock at 290, use of company vehicles by employees, fiber optic contract, cell phone use by employees, a potential \$11 million referendum in April 2010. We are continually hearing the president of the board say "that spending was approved in the Finance/Facilities/Athletic Committee". Three BOE members are deciding how our taxpayer money is being spent. All in the vane of openness and transparency, right?

As a taxpayer of Clifton, I am sick and tired of this overspending BOE and sick of their shallow promises of openness and transparency. The residents of Clifton will remember this in the upcoming April BOE elections. Spring cleaning is just around the corner! Let's start by cleaning house at the BOE!

Mary Sadrakula
Clifton, NJ

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