

Letter to the Editor: Were these Complaints Worth Spending \$250,000?

As many readers are aware, the Clifton BOE continues to waste taxpayer money on dreamed up ethics charges against Commissioner Michael Paitchell. At last count, the BOE has spent \$250,000 of taxpayer money and the bills are continuing to mount up as the gang of five (Urcioli, Gagnon, Renta, Traier and Tahan) has re-filled the charges under Tahan's name since Marie Hakim's death.

It is worth remembering that the gang of six (Urcioli, Gagnon, Hakim, Renta, Traier and Tahan) voted back on March 7, 2007 to file charges against Paitchell without knowing or spelling out what the charges were. I quote from a March 11, 2007 Herald News article "Several board members said they didn't want to speculate on what the specific charges will be. A board attorney has yet to lay them out." Sound ridiculous, doesn't it?

While this is taxpayer money that is being spent, the taxpayers weren't supposed to be privy to the charges according to the School Ethics Commission and Code until a determination by the School Ethics Commission has been made. However, in a Clifton Journal December 18, 2008 article, the public learned that the BOE filed 7 counts against Paitchell 3 of which were dismissed. The article failed to inform the public of what these 3 counts were. The article did mention two of the four remaining counts (which I will get to later).

Here are the 3 counts that were DISMISSED – read them and you decide if they were worth spending \$107,000 (I took the total \$250,000 and divided it by 7 for an approximate per charge cost). 1) Paitchell's website which the BOE's gang of six believed provided misleading information about the school system – DISMISSED – (remember how Hakim lied in a 3/16/07 Clifton Journal article had the ethics charges had nothing to do with Paitchell's website? Also, Paitchell had received a written opinion from board attorney D'Elia before he posted and created his website saying it was ok to do.) 2) Paitchell wrote an editorial in a local newspaper that the BOE gang of six claimed provided misleading information to the public – DISMISSED – (so what if in the same newspaper on the same date, Commissioner Traier also wrote a letter to the editor as also a sitting Commissioner and did not state in his letter to the editor that the opinions expressed were his own and not the BOE's as Mr. Paitchell did – the gang of six didn't file charges against Traier, did they?) 3) Gang of six claimed Paitchell made a comment to a BOE candidate that Rice's decision to close school for a snow day on the last day petitions were due for the 2007 election was a ploy to keep prospective candidates away – DISMISSED – (Who cares? Like every other citizen in the US, Paitchell is entitled to his opinions.)

So do you think it was fiscally responsible for the gang of five (Urcioli, Gagnon, Renta, Traier and Tahan) to spend our hard earned money on these three ridiculous complaints! In my opinion, all five should be thrown out of office and reimburse taxpayers for this total waste of taxpayer funds!

Now, let's talk about one of the remaining counts against Paitchell (as reported in the 12/18/08 Clifton Journal article). One of the remaining counts is that "Paitchell met independently with the Clifton City Council to discuss board matters related to the possible purchase of Globe Properties following the board's vote in May 2006 to build a new middle school on Latteri Park". At a recent BOE meeting, BOE candidate Jim

Daley informed the public that this idea and meeting was his doing not Paitechell's. In fact, Mr. Daley informed the public that Commissioner Urciuoli knowingly attended the same meeting. Since Mr. Urciuoli is currently seeking re-election, the voting public needs an immediate explanation from Mr. Urciuoli on how he could vote to file ethics charges against Mr. Paitechell for attending this meeting while he was also a party to the event and attended this very meeting. Why is it Mr. Urciuoli that this same BOE didn't file charges against you for attending the meeting?

The article also stated that another of the remaining counts against Paitechell was that he "unilaterally offered to hire someone as the principal of one of the middle schools without discussing the matter with the rest of the board". How ridiculous is this charge? It would take a vote of at least five members of the BOE to hire anyone, so how could one person "unilaterally" offer to hire anyone?

What a pathetic waste of \$250,000 taxpayer funds? And to think it is this gang of five (Urciuoli, Gagnon, Renta, Traier, and Tahan) that keeps telling us it is all about the kids, right? \$250,000 would have bought our children their band uniforms! \$250,000 could have been used to hire at least 5 teachers? \$250,000 could have gone into the dangerously low level of \$13,000 in surplus! \$250,000 could have been used for Brighton Road costs overruns!

The voting public needs to remember this on Election Day! Urciuoli and Gagnon have wasted enough of our taxpayer money! It is time we the taxpayers vote them out!

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