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## [CE SBAC] March 27th meeting concerns

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Jen Bodenrader <bodenraderj@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 30, 2023 at 12:13 AM

To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

March 29, 2023

Dear School Building Advisory Committee,

Thank you sincerely for your dedication. I am following your efforts closely from home. I'm sure many others are too. You have my full support!

I want to communicate with you about the events and discussion of the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting and how things appeared to me.

Mary Ann Lynch mentioned at the start of the meeting that having information available to review before the meeting was vital to transparency. Penny Jordan emphatically agreed.

After the designated public comment portion of the agenda was over, Penny told the group that she wanted to have a second public comment, that was not on the agenda, later in the meeting. She wanted a second public comment because she was anticipating a person named "Phil" to arrive. She then noticed Phil was in the room and exclaimed, "Phil!". Phil then went into a long diatribe explaining how the committee needs to stop the RFP process and have him and his construction buddies spend the next 3-4 weeks telling the committee what they need to do and how they need to do it. Among his conclusive comments were that the committee needed to change/ explicitly state in the RFP to "renovate and add on" to the buildings. Following Phil's comments Penny made the case that the committee should pause the RFP process and use Phil's professional advice.

Tom Dunham, the person who publicly admitted to funding the "NO" school bond campaign expressed full support for Phil's suggestions and offered to also help tell the committee what to do and how to do it during the RFP pause.

Where was the prior notice and information available related to "Phil" and his presentation to and engagement with the committee? This gave the appearance of an invited speaker with no prior notice, and a meeting that was hijacked by a citizen who had convinced Penny prior to the

meeting that the RFP process needed to be paused and changed. Both Phil and Tom described needing to stop the process in part, because of how things appeared to “the town”. But Phil and Tom in no way speak for “the town”. And Phil’s comments and content were clearly expected by Penny but not on the agenda for prior review. Talk about lack of transparency.

Then advocating during a meeting hijacked by a speaker, outside of public comment, about content not on the agenda, that a specific local person, Phil (and Phil’s friends) should be the one(s) to provide professional expertise? Talk about lack of process.

If the committee is entertaining the idea of having “Phil” (no last name provided), Phil’s friends, and “NO” campaign funder Tom Dunham, and his friends, share their “expertise” with the committee during committee meetings and an RFP pause, I believe it is fair to ask some questions.

1. Has Phil, Tom, or their friends’ provided qualifications for the public to review?
2. What will the role of Phil and Tom be, exactly?
3. Are you going to have an open and fair process to select local professionals to share their expertise or just choose Phil and Tom and their friends?
4. How can citizens participate in a process when speakers and content is ad hoc? Will this be how the committee is run in the future?
5. What if others, like myself, object to the involvement of local construction professionals who have political motivations about the outcome of the project?
6. I am aware of at least one local professional with expertise who could be of great value. Should I just send her to make a presentation about what the committee needs to do? Or does she need to have a personal relationship with someone on the committee first?

I do believe by any measure the whole thing was highly unprofessional, non-transparent, and reeked of a dirty process. I believe it unethical to continue down this road and ask you to stop please.

I do see previous communications have been made to the committee identifying concerns in meetings about people speaking out of turn, not introducing themselves, going on long

diatribes, engaging with the committee as if they are contributing members, and hijacking portions of the agenda to implant their own.

Maybe the next thing the committee should consider is hiring a meeting facilitator to ensure that meetings are held to basic standards of schedule, transparency, agenda items, introductions with addresses within public comment periods and contained to 3 minutes time, and to ensure zero special favors or special influence by any citizen because of their relationship with member(s) of the committee.

It appears that the committee has poor boundaries with the citizens present at meetings and this presents an ethical violation. The persons on the committee went through intense transparent public processes to be selected and part of this consideration was representativeness of our town. You are each vetted and selected to have significant input into this project. The people in attendance are not. They each represent one voice out of 9,600+ local citizens. They represent no one other than themselves. By engaging with them as if they are on the committee, you are magnifying their unvetted input thousands of times greater than what is in the public's scale and public's interest. Remember, they are each 1 out of 9,600, no vetting, and not representative. It is not ethical or accurate to offer them input as if they are 1 out of 15.

The events of the meeting gave the appearance of an old boys' network that wants to take over the school building process and project and you are letting them do it. I watched as our town's SBA committee got completely hijacked by Phil's agenda. He participated as idea leader, expert, and a full member of the committee and this should never be allowed to occur by anyone about anything. I plead with you to never let it occur again. You will not earn the trust of our town with this kind of process. Please use the results of a survey to better hear our 9,600+ voices!

Please do better to not be so influenced by individuals you know and invite them to permeate the committee. Please set boundaries with individuals who are present at meetings. Please be sure that transparency, healthy boundary facilitation, and ethical process are primary. Please remember, there are 9,600+ neighbors and we all care!

Thanks so much for reading,

Sincerely,  
Jen

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Cape Elizabeth, Maine

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