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## Memorandum and supporting documents for your review

1 message

Janet Villiotte <[leapyear72@mac.com](mailto:leapyear72@mac.com)>

Sun, Apr 8, 2018 at 6:50 AM

To: Jessica Sullivan <[jessica.sullivan@capelizabeth.org](mailto:jessica.sullivan@capelizabeth.org)>, jarnie.garvin@capelizabeth.org, sara.lennon@capelizabeth.org, caitlin.jordan@capelizabeth.org, penny.jordan@capelizabeth.org, valerie.randall@capelizabeth.org, christopher.straw@capelizabeth.org  
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Dear Councilors:

Attached you will find a memo detailing a number of issues concerning the management of our School Department. Reference links are listed at the end of the memo. I have also included a folder which contains a series of appendices. Each provides additional supporting documentation.

I will be speaking during the public comment portion of Monday's Council meeting.

Thank you in advance for your attention to, and consideration of, these matters.

Respectfully,

Janet Villiotte

7 Montgomery Terrace

CE

 **CE TC Memo Final.pdf**  
489K

5 April 2018

To: Cape Elizabeth Town Council

From: Janet Villiotte  
7 Montgomery Terrace  
Cape Elizabeth

Town Councilors,

I am writing to you as a concerned parent, citizen and taxpayer. As those ultimately responsible for decisions around our Town's management and financial health, I wish to share that I am extremely concerned about financial mismanagement, administrative mismanagement and lack of transparency by the Cape Elizabeth School Board.

The following information has been obtained with great difficulty:

- Review of the 2018-19 CESD Budget Appropriation Master Report (obtained directly from the Business Office) revealed that as of 2/11/18, **CEMS and PC Administration** expenditures had already exceeded by approximately **\$35,000 each** the entire 2017-18 FY allocation. (Appendix B)
- Documents obtained after a FOAA request confirmed that **Principal Hasson received \$114,726** plus benefits, and **Principal Tracy received between \$87,106 and \$116,142** plus benefits during FY 2018- and neither has worked since July. Principal Eismeier, after 17 years, received \$30,000. (Appendix D)
- **The 2017 municipal audit for CE noted "Significant Deficiencies"**, due to CESD bookkeeping issues (9 pages of line items were cited). Approximately **\$4 million of commingled funds** were discovered. This is the first time ever that our town has received a review of this nature. (Appendix F)
- A request for CESD's monthly financial statements for the current FY was made, and the Business Manager's response was that **monthly reports are not generated**. (Any functional financial institution should track monthly expenditures.)
- **Tremendous CESD administrative turnover- within the last 6 years CESD has employed:**
  - 2 Superintendents
  - 2 CEHS Assistant Principals
  - 4 CEMS Principals
  - 3 (possibly 4) CEMS Assistant Principals
  - 3 Pond Cove Principals
  - 3 Pond Cove Assistant Principals

- 3 Special Education Directors
- 2 Directors of Instruction

**Turnover destabilizes the school community from the top down.** It makes our district less attractive to potential applicants and new families. Conducting candidate searches for these top positions is also costly in terms of time and dollars. (Appendix A)

- The Interim Superintendent did not publicly acknowledge the most recent administrative departures until July 17, when he sent a letter to the school community, pledging not to rush the hiring process and the inclusion of all stakeholders. There was little opportunity for public input during this four-week period in the summer, nor were any School Board meetings held between June 26 and August 14, when selected candidates for both Principal positions, and the PC Assistant Principal, were voted on. The only stakeholder opportunity was when parents were invited for one hour to meet one finalist for each school, once a finalist for each school was selected. These two meetings also were held at very short notice, on August 9 and August 10. (Appendix K)

- **CESB held 31 executive sessions in 2017 alone.** Nearly all executive sessions listed “personnel issues” as a rationale. In contrast, Falmouth School Board held only 3 Executive sessions in 2017. The Yarmouth School Board held 2; MSAD 51’s School Board had 3. (Appendices E, H)

- **The CESD website is extremely difficult to navigate,** creating a barrier to access. Gmail users have been asked in some places to log in to see 2018-19 budget documents, which is a violation of the public’s right to know. There is no such registration requirement on the Town’s website. Such barriers to viewing public documents are probably illegal. A 3 week correspondence with the Business Office was required to rectify this issue. Budget documents for 2018-19 available online are not kept up to date, despite numerous edits noted in the activity log. (Appendices C, I, L)

**Contextual Considerations:**

- a trend continues: projected 40% decrease in state education subsidy, roughly \$875,000
- possible increase in CE property taxes, up to 11%
- proposed school renovations/new buildings- current estimate is \$27 million

**Conclusion:**

**The School Board members are elected public officials who are accountable to the voters and taxpayers.** They hire and oversee the CESD Superintendent, whose responsibilities include personnel and budgetary matters, among them oversight of the Business Office. There is an enormous fiduciary duty to our Town that has been shirked. There is a lack of transparency, indeed a culture of opacity in decision-making, without which trust and relationships cannot be built. Anyone who cares about the quality of our children’s education and the disposition of our tax dollars should be extremely concerned and asking for answers to the questions raised by these findings. (Appendices C, J)

**Request for Council Action:**

The Town Council is the ultimate responsible body for Cape Elizabeth's financial health, community stability and tax rate. Given the serious warning raised by all of this information, I am respectfully requesting that public meetings with the School Board be held to demand answers, accountability and corrective action plans for the following:

- Failure to efficiently manage the SD budget
- Failure to meet government audit standards with bookkeeping and accounting practices
- Failure to effectively hire, manage, and maintain administrative staff, causing a disruptive school system environment and wasteful spending.
- Failure to provide transparency or ease of access via the CESD website or Business Office
- Possible violations of Maine law executive session meeting requirements
- Possible violations of Maine's right to know laws

Please find attached all supporting reference documentation.

Thank you.

Janet Villiotte

## References:

- CESD Budget, Property Tax Proposals:  
[https://www.capeelizabeth.com/news/2018/school\\_budget2019.html](https://www.capeelizabeth.com/news/2018/school_budget2019.html)
- Town of CE FY 2016-17 Audit Report:  
[https://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/rules\\_reg/reports/audit/Cape-Elizabeth-Annual-Financial-Report-6.30.17.pdf](https://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/rules_reg/reports/audit/Cape-Elizabeth-Annual-Financial-Report-6.30.17.pdf)
- CESD Budget Appropriation Master Report:  
<https://sites.google.com/1/capeelizabethschools.org/budget/overview/new/cape-elizabeth-schools-2018-19-budget-process>  
(Town of Cape Elizabeth→School Department link→CE Schools dropdown menu→School Board→select School Board tab→Budget Information→CE Schools 2018-19 Budget process→2018-19 Budget Master)
- Town of CE Website Operating Guidelines and Privacy Policy:  
[https://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/rules\\_regs/policies/home.html](https://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/rules_regs/policies/home.html)
- Definition of Executive Session per Maine Statute:  
<http://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/1/title1sec405.html>
- CESB Meeting Schedule:  
[https://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/elected\\_officials/school\\_board/meeting\\_materials/home.html](https://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/elected_officials/school_board/meeting_materials/home.html)  
(Town of Cape Elizabeth→School Department link→CE Schools dropdown menu→School Board→select School Board tab→School Board Meeting Materials→select year (2017)→schedule with links to agendas, minutes)
- Falmouth School Board Executive Session Record:  
<https://falmouthschools.org> (School Board link→meeting minutes)
- Yarmouth School Board Executive Session Record:  
<https://yarmouthschools.org/o/yasd/page/school-committee-meeting-minutes>  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mrDi-fV9zsNXxmXVR8lcr6G02MZtGG/view>  
[https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/139466/minutes\\_2-8-18.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/139466/minutes_2-8-18.pdf)
- MSAD 51 School Board Executive Session Record:  
<http://www.msad51.org/home/school-board/2017-2018-meeting-dates-agendas-minutes-video>  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vFuJRYD1cRMirev2vE-o6DfaTHqY0rkPFtETj27uNI/edit?pli=1>  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WGbeEEsXOVuIGuU3eEEQrS6vYN-3es5-da8k5Q4XPA/edit>  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LuZlpfKH-DIAIG-RhDzNJ41vTHrU1kYJG79Xv06U050/edit>
- Acknowledgement of Principal Resignations:  
<https://schoolboard.cape.k21.me.us/146-school-board/school-board-news/717-letter-to-k-8-parents-and-staff>
- Notification of New Administrative Hirings:  
<https://superintendent.cape.k12.me.us/177-superintendent/superintendent-news/722-superintendent-s-update-2017-08-11>