



Sunday, February 29, 2004

Mom quits School Committee

By Grace Rubenstein
Staff Writer

NORTH ANDOVER -- The embattled School Committee member who pulled her daughter from the high school this month because of alleged teacher mistreatment has quit her elected post.

In a fiery resignation letter, Darlene Rose Torosian labeled her fellow board members and School Superintendent Harry K Harutunian "politicians" who act concerned but don't take action. The example, she says, is her repeated unanswered complaints about teachers being too harsh to her 16-year-old daughter Amanda Marquis and other students.

"I just feel no one's really being accountable," Torosian said Friday. "For me to keep following that path, it's not ethical for me. I'm with a board and a superintendent who are all politicians. ... It's not about listening to kids. It's not about finding out what's working and what's not."

Her fellow board members deny Torosian's charges that they have been "manipulated" by Harutunian into believing he takes care of their concerns. Harutunian could not be reached for comment, but Torosian's former colleagues fired back.

"I'm disappointed that any elected official would resign a position that they were elected to by voters and then take last-minute, unprofessional swipes at their fellow board members and the superintendent of schools," said School Committee Chairman Daniel J. Murphy. "I think she was given every opportunity to participate as a School Committee member. In fact, I think the current superintendent spent an extraordinary amount of time with her seeking to address the various issues that she brought to the table, and it was never enough for her."

"I'm not a political person," said School Committee member Bruce E. Baker, who added he was disappointed Torosian never mentioned her concern about the board's behavior to him. "I have no political ambitions or aspirations, and I think that's true of the other committee members. They do this because they want to help the community."

Throughout her two years on the committee, Torosian has split with other members on her concerns over teacher behavior. While she says there are many great teachers in the district, some damage students by using humiliation as a disciplinary tool and need to be held accountable.

She angered many community members and pleased others earlier this month when she pulled her daughter from the high school, arguing that the atmosphere was too restrictive and the discipline by some teachers and administrators was too frequent and undeserved.

This year, Torosian missed six of 11 School Committee meetings, most of which she said occurred because her children were sick with a long-lasting virus.

To fill the empty position, state law says the selectmen and School Committee must jointly appoint someone to complete the remaining year of Torosian's term, said Town Clerk Joyce A. Bradshaw.

Baker said the silver lining to his colleague's resignation may be a chance for selectmen and School Committee members -- who have clashed over issues in the past -- to come together and find common ground as they select a replacement.

"It's kind of a neat opportunity," he said.

[Next Story: Latin Kings live, die by rigid organization](#) 

Copyright© 2003 Eagle-Tribune Publishing. All Rights Reserved. Contact [Online editor](#)