

Letter to the Editor

Resident responds to School Committee letter

To the Editor:

I found it interesting that Carl McFadden and Rob Spadafora, chair and co-chair of the Reading School Committee, respectively, chose to applaud the recent redistricting of Reading's elementary schools in yesterday's Letters section. (Letter to the Editor, 2/1/05). Why would such an inclusive, flawless and democratic process such as the one they describe require a defense? An accolade?

Probably because a lot of people do not think this whole process went well. It was, and is, rife with abuse of power, influence and perhaps, incompetence. It does not pass the 'smell' test for many Reading residents.

Their interpretation (meaning the School Committee and Mr. Schettini's) of the events leading up to and the consequences of the redistricting lines they chose, omits reams of information. For instance:

- they convened 'parental advisory councils' that were never allowed, or asked, to advise;
- the superintendent-sponsored 'information sessions' were nothing more than sales pitches for a proposal that was decided upon without input from the aforementioned advisory councils; the very best and most worthy modifications were dismissed;
- the superintendent and school committee asked for, and received, an alternative plan that was less onerous on a particular neighborhood, more safety conscious, more cost-effective and essentially, fairer to all involved. The superintendent reviewed that plan, never brought it to a public forum and summarily rejected it without comment;
- open-meeting statutes may have been ignored as at least two "parent advisory council" participants reported changes in redistricting decisions between official meetings on at least two occasions.

The process was flawed throughout, and the decisions were reached in something other than a public forum. This is not terribly democratic. Many of our elected school committee persons were disengaged, uninterested or too busy to read the actionable proposals.

In their conclusion, Mr. McFadden and Mr. Spadafora "thank all of the parents, teachers and townspeople for all of their support". Quite an assumption. Can't find many who concur.

I await the day that 'Eaton East' parents and their children have an opportunity to thank McFadden, Spadafora, Webb, Dahl and Carpenter for their support. Thanks for their child's safety. Thanks for their well-being.

Charles A. Shairs