

## Letter to the Editor

### The Story Behind Article 20

Dear Mr. Feely,

Regarding Town Meeting Warrant Article 20, I think it may be useful to consider how we, as a community, have arrived at this point.

In December's information sessions, affected residents were repeatedly advised that these were not forums for specific questions. That the process was "difficult", a lot of "hard work" was involved and one committee person told us that "if you don't like our proposal, come up with one of your own". We later learned that the "hard work" was accomplished in thirty minutes. However, in response, a proposal was developed and the School Committee was made aware of it. On the appointed evening for a formal vote, the only proposal under consideration was the original proposal, the one authored by the Superintendent.

Throughout the process, citizens asking specific questions were advised to wait or were simply ignored by the Superintendent and elected School Committee persons. Later, inquiries via email and USPS went unanswered.

The issue for many of us has become an issue of trust. We are ignored when we ask questions; we cannot get a public hearing on a thoughtful, competitive redistricting proposal that took time and energy to research; letters to elected officials go unanswered and Town Counsel opines that our issues are "out of order" for town meeting, well in advance of that meeting. Who solicited Town Counsel's opinion and why? What is achieved by this refusal to revisit a decision? Has Town Counsel weighed-in on other Town Warrant items?

The families in this neighborhood pay local taxes. Those taxes will be spent, under the current redistricting proposal, to bus our children over two miles from their homes. This makes redistricting a "budgetary matter" that meets Counsel Cohen's exception (Chronicle, March 16) for Board of Selectmen review.

Legal technicalities and opinions aside, Reading redistricting has become an issue of trust. If those elected can ignore our concerns with impunity, how can ours be considered a representative system of governance? Do our elected officials still work for us?

Sincerely,  
Charles & Janean Shairs  
John & Stacy Sannella