

More Letters

Infanti for Selectman

To the editor:

As most of you know, current chairman George Infanti will be seeking re-election to the Board of Selectmen. For the past 6 years it has been my pleasure to serve with George on the Board. I have seen how his experience and maturity has had a stabling affect on the way the Board operates and addresses town business. During his service, George, at all times, has looked out for the best interests of the taxpayers of Amherst. George will always listen closely to both sides of an issue and has then shown his ability to make those tough decisions that had to be made. He has made those decisions, even if some of them were unpopular with a particular faction, with the benefit of the whole town in mind.

George Infanti will continue to be an asset to the Town of Amherst in his role on the Board of Selectmen. Please join me in voting for George on March 9th.

Sincerely,
Bruce Bowler
Amherst

Return Marilyn Peterman to Board of Selectmen

To the editor:

Marilyn Peterman has been an Amherst resident and involved in town and regional public issues for three decades. She served five terms on the Amherst Board of Selectmen. She was a charter Board Member of the Merrimack Regional Water District. Over the years she has served on various committees and lead initiatives concerned with land use, conservation, highway improvements and public education. She was Chair of the Souhegan High School Finance Advisory Committee. Few in our community have devoted so much time to public service, both officially and as a concerned private citizen. We are lucky Marilyn has decided to serve again as a Selectman. She is a person of integrity and intelligence who will work for more efficient town government and protect Amherst's quality of life.

John G. David
Amherst

Support for the Amherst School District Budget

To the editor:

We, the undersigned members of the Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee, strongly urge voters in next month's Amherst Town elections to cast their votes in favor of the proposed Amherst School District budget. The Amherst School Board and Administration have done an outstanding job in crafting a budget that is fiscally responsible and impacts the taxpayer no more than necessary while still maintaining the high quality education that we have all come to expect from Amherst Schools. The FY11 budget represents a spending increase of only 0.67%. This small increase, even in the face of very large benefit premium increases for health insurance and retirement contributions, shows the hard work, ingenuity and overall fiscal responsibility of the Amherst School Board and the Administration. Once again, they have been able to maximize the efficient use of tax dollars, taking into consideration the difficult economic times that we are in, and still ensure a continued high educational standard for Amherst students.

We thank the Administration and the Amherst School Board for their high level of cooperation and professionalism during the budget review process. The budget figures, supplemental data, and quick response to questions raised by the committee, enabled the review process to be conducted in an efficient and timely manner. Please vote on March 9 and support the Amherst School District budget.

Sincerely,
The Amherst School District Ways & Means Committee
Mark Vincent (Chair)
Deb Naro
Tedd Landon
David Yabroudyy
Steve Cummings
Stephanie Hall
Paul Prescott

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

Please join us in supporting
Dwight Brew
Amherst Selectman

Nancy Head	Sue and Bob Heaton	Liz and Bill Overholt
Ward & Peg Bennett	Mark Vincent	CJ Butler
Rob Graybill	Deb Naro	Peter de Bruyn Kops
Peter Maresco	Tedd Landon	Matthew & Emily Emmet
Christine Janson	David Yabroudyy	Jan Bunker & Dave Fagan
Bruce Bowler	Tom Strong	Ann & Clark Logan
Addie Hutchison	Charlene Carper	Richard Martini
Kim Parrett	Jennifer & John Devine	Anne & Ted Krantz
Dana Redmond	Deborah & Alan Cort	Carrie Brew, Fiscal Agent

Dwight Brew for Fiscal Responsibility

To the editor:

I support Dwight Brew's bid for a seat on the Town of Amherst Board of Selectmen. Dwight has shown leadership and commitment in his service to Amherst on the Amherst School Board for seven years, three of those as Chair, as well as his service on the Amherst Ways and Means Committee prior to that.

Dwight Brew has worked to bring a transparency to the workings of the Amherst School Board and to develop a working relationship between the Board and the Ways and Means Committee. He also worked with the Recreation Commission to bring about the joint development of the Bean Fields for Amherst residents. During his time on the Amherst School Board, Dwight made fiscal accountability his great focus. He believes that it is the duty of those who serve to gain the greatest economic benefit possible for every taxpayer dollar spent.

If you share in the value of government transparency, cooperative working relationships, and fiscal accountability, please join me in supporting Dwight Brew on March 9 for the position of selectman for the Town of Amherst.

Lisa Ambrosio
Amherst

Bennett Supports Brew for Selectman

To the editor:

I urge you to vote for Dwight Brew for Amherst Selectman. I have had the pleasure of working with Dwight on the Amherst School Board for the last three years and it has been an outstanding experience.

Dwight's leadership ability has caused everyone to understand and focus on the truly important items to the Amherst School District, and I am sure he will do the same for the Town of Amherst as a Selectman.

One of the reasons that Dwight's fellow board members put their confidence in Dwight is his ability to look at truly complex issues and very quickly understand all of the aspects of the issues including any potential down-stream consequences.

Dwight Brew is a longtime resident of Amherst who is dedicated to the betterment of his community. Dwight is a tireless worker who has a solid understanding of budgeting and makes fiscal responsibility a priority.

Dwight has been a great Amherst School Board member and chair and will make a great Selectman -- please join me voting for Dwight Brew for Amherst Selectman on March 9th.

Peg Bennett
Amherst

I Ask Parents on The Sidelines to Vote Yes for Article 24

To the editor:

I take responsibility for the lack of adequate playing fields in town. As a parent I have stood on the sidelines in many area towns commiserating with other Amherst parents about the quality and quantity of these towns' fields in comparison to ours. I frequently heard,"Why can't we have this in Amherst?" These other towns represent a broad socioeconomic span -- including Swanzey, Hampstead, Milford, Hollis and Bedford -- so, the issue can't be purely financial. And yet I, like most other parents, have failed to attend ARC meetings and to tell our Selectmen that we want more for our kids. That we demand more. The fact is with the loss of the baseball diamond at Cemetery we will have exactly one more diamond than the town had in 1979. That's one diamond added in 30 years and yet our town has grown exponentially in that time.

To those who are making the argument that Bean Fields are the replacement for Cemetery, and that we are, therefore, "all set with field space," you are simply incorrect. Bean served to alleviate some of the overcrowding on our fields. Even with the addition of Bean the baseball program is hard-pressed to schedule adequate practice time for the 300+ players in youth baseball. And there is no space to make-up rained out practices and games. I know this because I receive the requests from coaches looking for any scrap of grass to practice on. So, yes, the loss of Cemetery is a crisis.

To those who say that we're rushing in to the purchase of the Brewster property I would like to clarify a few things. First, I grew up here and, yes, that property does flood. But not every year and certainly not even through most of the spring when it does flood. There is higher topography on the property that lends itself to fields that are more water sensitive. The MCAA fields in Milford also occasionally flood and yet they are able to maintain an impressive complex. The Amherst Country Club golf course has been able to survive in the same flood plain for many years without golf carts "floating down the river".

Second, for all the letters stating that there are better suited properties, I have yet to hear of specific locations. Please contact ARC right away if you know of those secret locations that are both suitable and for sale.

And third, the cost of the Brewster property. Many of the arguments against the purchase seem focused on the assessed property value. Would you perhaps prefer to purchase a property elsewhere in town for an assessed \$500,000 and then spend \$450,000 (the cost of Bean development) and four years clearing land and developing fields? Does that make more financial sense? The beauty of Brewster is that the land is cleared and flat and teams could begin using those fields as soon as this fall. Yes, baseball diamonds do take more time to develop and the Amherst Baseball Club will work closely with ARC in obtaining development money via grants and fundraising to see that happens before we lose Cemetery in two years. Let's be clear about that - two years. I keep hearing that we don't need to rush because we have four more years at Cemetery. The Trustees have said that we need to prepare to be out of Cemetery by 2012 so they can begin infrastructure preparations. We have no time to waste at this point. There have perhaps been missed opportunities over the past ten years to tie in fields with housing developments but the town missed those opportunities to be proactive. The Brewster property will need to be developed over time. If we wait two to four years to solve this problem there may not be a solution that is cost-feasible. It is the kids in our town who will suffer the consequences of our inaction.

And finally, this is not an issue just about youth sports - this is an issue of what is a community. For hundreds of families in town, youth sports are vital to our sense of community. Adults form friendships standing on those sidelines in hot sun and cold rain as we cheer on each other's children in their victories and share in the disappointment of losses. Our children learn about sportsmanship and fair play and respect for opponents. New parents meet at the swing set at Cemetery Fields. For all of us, asking for new fields does not seem like a "frivolous" request in this economy. For us it is a necessity - it is one of the foundations of the community that we belong to.

I ask every parent on the sidelines of every sport to join me in voting yes for Article 24 on March 9 - for your kids, yourselves and our community. Every vote counts as Article 24 needs a 60% majority vote. If you will be unable to vote in person please make sure to obtain an absentee ballot from the Town Clerk.

Sincerely,
Kim Batchelder
President, Amherst Baseball Club

Memories of Land Purchases

To the editor:

The proposal to buy Brewster's fields (Article 24) reminds me of the Lindabury Orchard land purchase a few years ago. At that time, there was positive PR about all the great benefits of owning that property, including growing fruit. More recently, those dreams have turned to disillusionment when it became clear that a huge amount of work would be needed to re-store and operate that orchard. There was a reason Woodmont stopped managing that orchard a few years before the Town purchase. A little due diligence by town officials, such as consulting with experienced orchard operators, would have popped the dream bubbles before the purchase instead of afterwards.

Now I see the advocates of Article 24 proposing a long list of activities for the Brewster property, including snowshoeing, cross country skiing, walking, gardening, canoeing, etc. We already have a canoe port about a mile upstream and there is plenty of town-owned land suitable for the other activities. The Bragdon Farm and Lindabury Orchard parcels come to mind. It is like a child asking for more pie when she has not eaten what is already on her plate.

There are plenty of other mouths wanting to be fed with our limited funds. In my view, this one does not make the grade. Please vote NO on Article 24.

Peter de Bruyn Kops
Amherst

Support for Funding Municipal Transportation

To the editor:

It is not often that I have reason to criticize our elected officials. In general, I think that the Town of Amherst is well managed by caring and dedicated citizens that don't get nearly the respect or recognition that is due. That is why I am so perplexed and saddened by the Board of Selectman's recent decision not to support Article 43 in this years town warrant.

Article 43, simply stated, would add \$1.50 fee to every vehicle registration for the purpose of funding a "municipal transportation fund." This fund would set up a reserve to support local transportation improvement projects, in particular public transportation programs. The article was brought forth by petition from citizens who have tried for years to get the town to commit a limited amount of funds to support a regional ride share program..

I recognize that these are difficult times, and it is politically challenging to propose increased expenditures to voters. However, when was the last time the town has moved to help its senior residents? How many line items do we have in the budget for "senior services?" How are we supporting our seniors who are virtually house bound because they can no longer drive, or are afraid to drive after dark or in bad weather? These people pay taxes too! What is their burden on us? They don't have children in school. They don't heavily burden our roads. They require basic town services: police, fire, and rescue.

Our elected officials are expected to look after the needs of our entire community, not just our children. This town spends virtually nothing on social services. The Selectmen have even put our existing paltry support of social services as a warrant article. What is that all about? A total of \$35,000 or less than one half of 1% of our total Town expenditures can't be a line item in the budget? Where is our moral compass? Where is our sense of fairness and communal responsibility?

Let's get back to some sense of rational prioritization. There are approximately 14,000 vehicle registrations per year in Amherst. That's right, one per person. Article 43, if approved, will raise additional revenues of approximately \$21,000 per year. Frankly, I think that the Board of Selectmen should have just voted to include this appropriation in the budget along with the existing \$35,000 for social services. But I can understand their political desire to pass that issue on to the voters. If we need to come up with additional cost savings to "pay for" this program, then I have more than a few suggestions! How about a transfer from our Rec. Department programs? How about a little more health insurance cost sharing from our municipal and school employees? How about one less employee, or a part time equivalent in our school and town employment base? How about two fewer hours per week at the transfer station?

Personally, I support the warrant article as proposed. It makes sense to establish a public transportation fund and tie its funding to vehicle registrations. This is not a "value based assessment," it is a user fee. Do we really need one vehicle per resident in town? Probably not, but we choose to own these vehicles. Our senior citizens don't choose to be shut in or dependent on the goodwill and generosity of others to fill their basic transportation needs. The population in Amherst is aging. In a selfish way, we need to plan for our own future needs.

I think that our town leadership has failed to lead on this issue. Let's send a message that we need to take into consideration all the needs of our residents, old as well as young. Let's vote to sustain and encourage a diversified population in Amherst, with reasonable services for all. Let's vote to pass Article 43 and tell our seniors that we want them to remain a rich and vibrant part of our "community".

Paul Spiess
Amherst

The Problem Is Affordability

To the editor:

At the town's deliberative session (February 3, 2010) a gentleman made a motion to reduce the town's budget by about \$400,000 dollars. His reason was "the town could not afford the proposed budget". Right reason wrong budget. The school budgets make the town budget look like chump change. Some believe that Amherst does not spend enough on education. I am not sure how much "enough" is but if it is more than the present budget it is unaffordable.

Every year the school budgets increase in the face of declining enrollment. These increases are presented with the expectation of passing because the school boards know that voters with children in the schools will not vote for anything they perceive will adversely affect their children.

The Amherst School District proposed budget includes wage increases of 2.7% for support staff as a result of an egregious contract negotiated by the board and approved by the voters last year. Included are increases for those not under a bargaining agreement. These are also called "Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)" This is curious since the cost of living did not increase last year. These increases will be paid for by those taxpayers who did not receive a COLA increase and others who have lost their employment. I guess cutting expenses was out of the question.

This immoderate spending must stop. To do this voters must send obdurate school boards a message. I urge them to reject the school budgets. Fear not! The default budgets still represent an increase in spending over last year. If the increases are spent on education the students will not be short changed.

The problem is affordability. If spending continues with the past patterns of compound increases, the only people who will be able to afford to live in Amherst are those with annual incomes in excess of two hundred thousand dollars a year and SAU 39.

Joe Esposito
Amherst

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