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Mark Johnson - Public Comment - May 5, 2020

1 message

Mark Johnson <mpj220@gmail.com>
To: Board of Selectmen <Bos@grafton-ma.gov>

Tue, May 5, 2020 at 10:49 AM

Please accept the following as public comment for the Select Board meeting of May 5, 2020. Should this meeting be cancelled, or postponed, please include this public comment for the next scheduled meeting.

I request that this be read aloud and entered into record.

Submitted by:

Mark Johnson
19 Hilltop St.
N. Grafton, MA 01536

Members of the Select Board and office of the Town Administrator,

I am writing to express my concerns and disappointment with the recent conduct of a sitting member of the Select Board, Mr. Ed Prisby. Please understand, this is not a personal attack in any way. I am addressing his behavior and conduct.

It is blatantly obvious that Mr. Prisby is promoting a highly toxic environment from within our local government. I am sure all of you are aware that he has been disseminating wild conspiracy accusations (ie; warrantgate and lettergate) on his personal blog page "Planet Grafton". On this page, he is accusing other Select Board members and the Town Administrators office of improprieties accompanied with a varying level of insults directed towards each. Please also be aware of is his willingness do the same while participating in various Facebook discussion groups. Since his postings are from his account named "Selectboard Member Ed Prisby" and not his personal account, one can only assume that these statements are distributed as part of his official capacity with the town. Although, I am certain he will argue otherwise.

Recently I had an interesting interaction with Mr. Prisby on a Facebook group page named "2020 Override Discussion Group: Grafton MA" where Edward Prisby shares a position as "founding member" along with many members of the School Committee, Finance Committee, and Planning Board. The "about" tab describes this page as a "Discussion group about the possibility of an override this year in Grafton MA." But, as of late, this discussion group has only turned into another platform to promote Mr. Prisby's town conspiracies and insults.

Please allow me to directly quote Mr. Prisby – *"Go try Donna, or Jen or one of the other know-nothings on the board with that crap."*

Immediately following this insult directed at all of his colleagues, the conversation only got worse . Mr. Prisby began actually suggesting that he come over to my home to collect a check because I cost his family money by not supporting a new library years ago. Again, allow me to quote Mr. Prisby's very words, please be aware that the direct quote contains profanity.

"way I see it? You owe me money for not keeping up on your capital."

"Because you guys could have replaced the library back in 1996 for \$1 million but you didn't decide to. Which cost my family More in taxes. You cost me more money. Can I come to your house for check?"

"In fact, let's go down the line of deferred capital expenses that your generation benefited from that my generation is now paying for Are you guys reimbursing me for that shit? I really want to know"

As his participation in this discussion continued to deteriorate, I urged Mr. Prisby to follow his own advice from an article he published on his Planet Grafton blog. I provided the following quote from that article:

“Lessons learned? If you don’t like someone’s opinion or the fact that they’re participating, don’t attack them personally. Don’t character assassinate. Don’t denigrate how they participate, or the forum they use. Address their arguments on their merits. Treat people – especially new people – with some respect. Why alienate new blood and dampen enthusiasm? If people are inclined to discuss local issues, organize and vote, these are exceptional people who should be celebrated. If your first inclination is to bash them, you aren’t just part of the problem, you are the problem.” Credit: Planet Grafton, article “Endgame”.

And how did he receive his very own words? He shifts gears and goes with the schoolyard argument of - you started it first. Mr. Prisby states “remember suggesting that I’m pro-override because I’m a lawyer and can afford it, without knowing that actually, my wife is laid off due to covid?”

This was referring to a comment that I sent in live during the April 7 Select Board meeting. But, what Mr. Prisby offers above is a complete fabrication on his part. I never said a word about him being pro-override, or his occupation, or about his ability to afford anything. I provided him with an exact quote of the comment. The comment questioned his opinion and how it applies to taxpayers plurally. His follow up comment to this not only doubled down on his original fabrication, but taking it further with some other cryptic fictional accusation of "Don't support the override! Or I'll make your financial situation public!".

Does any of this sound normal? Is this how a Select Board member should represent Grafton? Honestly, bizarre and disturbing seems to be the only descriptions that fit.

I would urge the Select Board to also ask Mr. Prisby to follow his own advice. Refrain from this current behavior and place more effort in representing the Select Board in the professional manner that the position deserves. If he cannot provide that level of professionalism, he should re-read the last sentence of his “Endgame” article and do the right thing.

Respectfully,

Mark Johnson

P.S.: Facebook allows the message author (Mr. Prisby) or the Group Administrator (sitting Finance Committee member) the ability to alter and/or delete posts or entire conversations. Should these direct quotes disappear, I can provide screenshots to support my quotes.