

## Debriefing my 7<sup>th</sup> grader

Paula Porten  
VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR

Last month, my 7<sup>th</sup> grade daughter at the North Andover Middle School came home from school and said that she learned in her Spanish class how the leader of Venezuela (Hugo Chavez) was a "good guy" for giving cheap oil to poor people here in the US. She also said that she learned in class that Chavez hated George Bush.

At first, I was shocked, but once I was able to speak without throwing a fit, I had to explain to her all about Hugo Chavez and Joe Kennedy. I told her how President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela paired up Joe Kennedy in providing oil to low income families through the program dial-joe-4-oil.

But, I also had to take the time to debrief her from the notion that the dictator from Venezuela was a "good guy". I told her how Chavez' motivation was simply to exploit the United States and that if he really cared about poor people, he would take care of his own. I explained that Venezuela was a sham of a democracy where free speech was punished by the government, that Chavez was a brutal dictator who closed down TV and radio stations, jailed and murdered people who spoke out against him and that Chavez was no friend of the United States. It had nothing to do with President Bush.

We had a long talk about how Hugo Chavez used the platform of the United Nations to spew hatred for the United States and that he called George Bush "The Devil" while embracing the president of Iran who wants to exterminate every Jew living in the world today.

"But, why didn't my teacher tell me all this?" my daughter asked. "Apparently your teacher is a fan of Hugo Chavez and is only telling you the things she likes about him," I had to respond. "It is something you are going to be dealing with throughout your high school and college career," I told her.

I also explained how Hugo Chavez was a friend and admirer of Fidel Castro and has aligned himself with Cuba, a communist country which is also an



PHOTO: COURTESY  
Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez with Cuban dictator Fidel Castro

enemy of the United States. She seemed so surprised as I told my 7<sup>th</sup> grader that Joe Kennedy should be ashamed of himself for teaming up with Chavez, especially in light of the fact the Joe Kennedy's Uncle, the late President John F. Kennedy, fought against Cuba and communism and defended free speech.

I then called my local member of the North Andover School Committee and told him the sad story of the indoctrination of the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Spanish class. Finally, I printed out several stories for my daughter to read about the so called "good guy" of Venezuela that her teacher had her practically idolizing, including the Wall Street Journal editorial from last year "Dial Joe-4-Chavez" which I recommend all of her 7<sup>th</sup> grade classmates and her teacher read.

It was bad enough that a teacher in the North Andover Schools was trying to indoctrinate my child to revere an anti-Semitic dictator, but what made it worse, was that it wasn't a social studies teacher whose job it is to discuss current events and the nation of Venezuela. This was a Spanish teacher in a Spanish class.

Who knew?



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## Silence of town officials at N.A. Special Town Meeting is unacceptable

Sandy Glead  
NORTH ANDOVER UNITED

This Monday's special town meeting demonstrated far more about the shortcomings of municipal government than it did about the average citizen's desire to exert control over wireless communications. The wireless article sparked very legitimate concerns about:

\* our town's failure to monitor current cell tower permits

\* our town's failure to enforce our own cell tower bylaws

\* the presence of a cell tower in a church steeple 300 feet from the Atkinson School, clearly in violation of the 650 setback required in our bylaw.

Our town attorney advised citizens that federal wireless communications laws typically override local wireless zoning laws in court. He did not speak to the issues of who is responsible for monitoring and enforcing our bylaws, why it hasn't been done, and what procedures are in

place to revise unenforceable bylaws to bring them into compliance with state and federal statutes.

When former Board of Selectman Susan Haltmaier asked why these permits were allowed to expire and run up large, probably uncollectible punitive fees, and whether our Planning Board had sent letters out to wireless vendors encouraging them to speed up their permit applications because a moratorium was pending, the silence was deafening.

North Andover United believes that it is unacceptable for town officials to ignore important questions from our citizens. Not answering Ms. Haltmaier's questions damages the credibility and accountability of our local government.

Ms. Haltmaier's first question had everything to do with sound municipal management practices. Whose responsibility is it to oversee these permits? Town Manager Mark Rees owes citizens an explanation of why the

## ALL ABOUT GEORGETOWN

### Scumbag developer or responsible businessman?

Lonnie Brennan

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Some are referring to developer John Longo as a lying scumbag for reneging on an agreement with the Georgetown Planning Board to deliver two affordable housing units. All very strange. Seems in 2002, Mr. Longo was granted permission to build on 24 lots (reportedly one of the more recent selling at over 600K) in exchange to a pledge to devote two units to affordable housing. Agreement signed, he went forth and built his homes. Now, he wants a good-sized part of his bond money back.

That's part of the over \$200K that the Planning Board has in a tripartite agreement, as a guarantee that Mr. Longo will fulfill all his promises.

Problem is, the units haven't been built. And at their Nov. 14th meeting, Mr. Longo informed the board that he didn't want to talk about his earlier promise and told the board that they can talk to his lawyer about it. Simply distilled: he made a deal and got the green light to build. He built and now seeks to change the terms of the bargain. Not very nice play.

But who would expect nice play from most developers in Town? Their goal appears to be: make a killing and move on. Promise anything and never deliver. All rather sad if true. I, for one, hope that's not the case with Mr. Longo. I'm sure it was a heated moment, a misperception, a bad night. We all have them. It happens. Goal now is to shake off the mistake, the misstep, and move forward.

Most big men can.

On Nov 6, 2007, Mr. Longo wrote a letter asking the Planning Board to lower the bond. Eight days later at the Planning Board meeting, the Board said sure, we can talk. Where are our two affordable housing units?

It ended up with threats of lawyers and Mr. Longo storming out of the building. Rumors have floated on the off-camera language uttered in the stairwell, but I have no confirmation. The fact remains, if a man gives you his commitment, his pledge, and then reneges on it, what kind of a man is he? Would you trust him? Would you release his bond money? This will be an interesting one to watch. Will the duly elected members of the Planning Board cave to a developer? Or hold him to his promise?

Will some lawyer find some trick to release Mr. Longo from his promise to the Town? Will the Planning Board ever trust any developer again? Or, will, in this most holy of seasons, kindness find all involved, and sanity and trust be as rapidly restored as a smile on a previously sullen face? Stay tuned. More details as soon as I get them.



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and is active in the Republican party. You can email him at [lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com](mailto:lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com).

#### ROWLEY - GEORGETOWN KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

**Sunday -12/2, 9AM, Mass.** There will be an installation of officers for the year 2007/08. The event will take place at the Rowley St. Mary parish in Rowley. An invitation is extended to the public to observe. **Tuesday -12/4 at 6PM** the annual Light Up For Christ night will take place at the council of the Knights on East Main Street in Georgetown. We will be serving hot dogs, hamburgers, and all Brother Knights and families are invited. We have asked member knights to bring a bag of non-perishable foodstuffs for the People-Helping-People program for their Christmas food drive. **Wednesday -12/19** is the annual Christmas party that the Knights celebrate at their council home on East Main St. in Georgetown. Please bring an unlabeled gift in the ten to fifteen dollar range to be put under the tree for the Yankee swap. This is a well-attended event and the invitation is extended to all eligible men who wish to check out the Knights.

permits weren't tracked. Then both he and the Board of Selectmen owe us an explanation of what systems have now been implemented to ensure that the permits [all permits] are renewed and not allowed to lapse again. If we have bylaws, we are legally required to follow them – not get tripped up in unenforceability issues we've created for ourselves. If the bylaws themselves are inherently flawed, then we are long-overdue in revising them to make them enforceable.

Ms. Haltmaier's second question concerns whether the Planning Board is acting in the best interests of the town or the holders of the permits. If they sent out a letter, it's a public document, and they need to release it to the public, now. The Planning Board needs to confirm that their actions must always put the interests of the town first. They also need to explain how or why a permit was issued that so flagrantly violated our bylaws,

allowing installation of a cell tower in an area occupied by three schools and close residential neighborhoods.

North Andover United took no position on the moratorium article itself. Our concern is that the terms of the **Joint Resolution**, pledging open and accountable government, be upheld. Our Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Finance Committee, and every other committee and board in town must understand that as citizens of North Andover, we deserve honest answers to honest questions, regardless of whether the news reveals bad judgment or just benign neglect.

Strong leadership requires you to be accountable for your actions when the going gets rough. We ask that our officials do the right thing – answer Susan's honest questions with honest answers, explain the cell tower next door to Atkinson, and do it at the next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting.