

Departing comments by Ian Grant

I've been humbled by the vast number of emails, phone calls, letters from not only parents but other residents. As I have reminded them, I am only one voice and one vote. It takes a Board and an administrative team that "gets it" to have success.

An old timer gave me a copy of the mailing I did 6 years ago and asked "did you do what you said you would do? Or was it just political rhetoric?". I couldn't believe someone actually kept that... but it made me think.

I ran 6 years ago because sitting out in the audience I really didn't like what I saw and realized it would have an impact on my children, Will and Elsa, who were just starting out in school system.

My observation was that the voice and concerns of parents appeared not to have a place at the table—I wanted to change that and have higher levels of communication and transparency.

I ran with the belief I could bring a business perspective to education—basic fundamentals of setting goals and being accountable to them.

I wanted to bring fresh energy and ideas to the benefit of students.

So when I look at this flier—I would have to say I did what I said I would do. This is a much better place than when I arrived.

Looking forward

The new Board will have its own, new personality. It will take its own path. But if I may just indulge to pass on four things that I have found helped guide me as a Board member and as Chair. Whether you follow them is entirely up to you—but at least they will be in writing...

1. "If it is the right thing to do for students. Do it. Don't wait. Every year that we wait is another year that 20, 50, 600 students are effected and that is wrong"- Probably never fast enough for me personally, but I think we made great strides in making changes that should happen, happen.
2. "Parents are the customers"- I know for some this statement irks them. I know that I didn't get everybody on board for this, but it is an important prism to look at many of the aspects of what we do- and here too I think we made great strides.

3. “Don’t kill the golden goose”- I have observed every year about 800 people vote against the school budget. There are far more residents in Rye that don’t have kids in school than there are those with kids in school. We are successful because of the support of those residents without kids in school. We owe it to be mindful of that—hopefully the past 2 years in particular, with near zero budget increases, have proven that we can still provide one of the best educations in NH and be sensitive to Rye financially as a whole.

4. “Don’t bury our heads in the sand when we are not doing something well—acknowledge it and spend the energy and time to fix it”- nothing bothered me more than when we put a “spin” on something that may be not great news. I encourage everyone to dig into the topic, the data, and take a bigger view. Ask tough questions with the goal of looking forward to making things better

A few thank you’s...

First to my wife Jules and my 2 children, Will and Elsa—they are the ones left at home to endure and cover for me as I spent my hours at a time in this capacity.

Teachers: While I obviously believe in an engaged Board, in the end we all realize that the changes and good ideas that we approve, have to be executed by you. That is not always easy or within your comfort zone. Yet in most cases you did so—for the betterment of the faces in your classrooms. I have personally seen so many wonderful actions of teachers with kids to help them, nurture them, raise the bar academically for them. You are the group that spends the most time with the students—and I thank you for all of your efforts.

Fellow Board members: I like that we all have opinions and are not afraid to share them with each other and get to a decision in the end—and move on to the next thing. While there are memorable long debates over some things—if we look at the minutes—the detailed minutes—I think everyone will see that for 85-90% of the votes we were in strong, if not, unanimous agreement. That has helped to advance the educational experience for all kids here. Thank you for the honor of selecting me as your chair for the last 4 years. As one of you will find out, the role and responsibility is important not just internally to the Board but externally to the public as well.

I also found that once people realized the chair does not make the decision on “snow days” the number of irate calls dropped significantly!

Betty- obviously we came on together and I appreciate—particularly in the first 3 years, the exorbitant amount of time you spent on school board matters from typing the minutes, to committee assignments, to contract negotiations. You alone carried a big

chunk of the load. The schools and students are better off as a result of much of your work. It has really been my honor to serve with you.

George: You are proof that you CAN teach an old dog new tricks. I know that sometimes what we asked of you over the past 6 years was out of your comfort zone—like doing things faster and better; The value of a marketing approach to communicate; Surveys, Goals and Detailed Minutes are probably in there too. But, I applaud you for changing and adapting to the direction that the Boards embraced. Your character is one of the most important, respected, and valuable aspects to the district. Thank you.

Debbie: They say keep an eye on the quiet ones! While it is not news to anyone at this table, I want to thank you for your behind the scenes work that gets little, if no, credit. You do a great job of keeping George focused and on track—and the rest of us informed.

Jim: as Jim reminded me this week—he and I got off to a rough start even before I was on school board. I was a skeptic and concerned about him. I now hold him in the highest regard for his approach to the business operations of the school. His wealth of knowledge and conservative approach is nothing but a golden asset to Rye. In looking at the way other schools (PHS) budget and share budget information, in seeing him action around contract negotiations—we are lucky to have Jim. Thank you.

Chris: I don't think it took more than two weeks into the new school year to see the significant change in atmosphere here at RJH. Great strides have been made here, and I know you have shared with us that there is more to be done, but I applaud you for what you achieved. Your forthright approach with the Board in appreciated. I'm glad you are here. Thank you.

Lane: Hard to know where to start you. 5 of my 6 years on the Board I have had a front row seat to watch your amazing leadership at RES. It was not an easy "retirement from Massachusetts" principal position—as some of us forewarned you—. You have a keen sense as to what is right and what needed fixing—and made sure that during your watch that RES got back on track. There are now hundreds of students that are unknowingly much better off. It is however not lost on parents or this Board. While there is always room for more improvement, I am eternally grateful for your work here. Thank you.

In closing, just a simple Thank you for letting me serve.