

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters to the editor are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

What is the real scandal?

During a time of so much upheaval in D38, the part that is receiving no attention is that in the middle of a year when the school district is planning an MLO and a bond offering, we are having a school board member quit due to ingrained establishment corruption of the board and administration, and a superintendent trying to quit to go to Douglas County because of “the positive direction that Douglas County is now headed in given their new board.”

Well, when the superintendent was rejected for that job, and after trying to leave D38 in the lurch with pending ballot issues, the board decided to give her a new three-year contract with a \$60,000 bonus to stay, when her old contract still had one year remaining on it! Why? What has she done for us? Trying to leave in a pivotal year when the district is about to ask for more money? Exposing our kids’ personal data multiple times? Purchasing more Common Core-laden textbooks for our schools?

Please keep these antics in mind next fall when they ask taxpayers for more money. Was our school board really thinking, or were they simply being led, duped, and bullied once again by the liberal CEA union, their minions in D38’s six-figure administration club, and their board puppeteer, Mark Pfoff? Our kids, our teachers, and the taxpayers deserve better than this.

Annette Araje

To Paul Lundeen

I just read your proposal to jail teachers who exercise their First Amendment rights regarding their employment.

I have one word: Seriously?

The fact that you even have thoughts like this show that you are absolutely not qualified to legislate or hold any position of leadership in our free, democratic society. Hitler, Stalin, and Pol-Pot called and want their ideas back.

Here’s an idea: How about introducing legislation that would make our Colorado teachers the highest paid in the nation instead of ranking 47th? You’re a “free market” guy, right? Oh, that’s right—you are only free market when it doesn’t conflict with your stingy, corrupt ideologies and personal interest.

Colorado is not a poor state and in fact is probably one of the richest and growing. However, with jackasses like yourself making policy—especially education policy—it’s no wonder state politics and government are a train wreck.

You will not be re-elected. Being emboldened by Trump, you have decided to show your true colors and they aren’t pretty.

I’m going to check and see how your pay as a state representative compares to the other 49 states in the U.S. If it ranks higher than 47th like the teachers, I’m going to start a petition to set it in-line with teacher pay ranking.

While you’re ruminating over the political suicide you just committed, how about going back to high school and taking a civics refresher—you have obviously forgotten everything you’ve ever learned regarding the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Good riddance to you and your ilk. You are all indeed bigger dirt bags than I ever imagined.

Charles Ashford

No more division, distraction, or delay!

Deal with growth now!

During the last school board election, the candidates all signed affidavits promising to be nonpartisan. Board policy BCA-E-1 (Code of Ethics for School Board Members) says, “Avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest and refrain from using my Board position for personal or partisan gain.” Some in the community, including candidates who were elected, did not follow those principles. Yet, Rep. Paul Lundeen questions whether School Board elections should be nonpartisan. Yes, they should. Because partisanship is divisive and prevents boards from taking the best interest of every student and every stakeholder to heart.

Now we find ourselves in a position where the board had to censure director Sarah Sampayo and request her resignation due to her partisanship. Sampayo has resigned and accused remaining members of bullying her. We need to move past this distraction and quickly appoint someone to fill the vacancy who can hit the ground running and doesn’t need a lot of time to learn how to be a board member.

We are at a critical time where the community can clearly see the explosive growth in development where houses are popping up and being bought at a ferocious pace. We have researched, we have met, we have deliberated, and we have designed. We have had second opinions and data-driven review. The conclusions are the same. We need two elementary schools and we need

to revert Bear Creek to a middle school.

Delay is not an option. The time to act is now!

Jackie Burhans

Evacuation in the event of a local wildfire

If the roads in the Tri-Lakes WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) have been mitigated enough to see our way out, and providing there’s not so much smoke that we cannot see (or breathe) while driving—get ready for bumper to bumper traffic all the way—especially along 105, County Line Road, Spruce Mountain, and including I-25. Prevailing winds during wildfire season (and thus the wildfires) tend to be from the south, so fire authorities would most likely direct us north along those sure-to-be congested routes. We’d need full tanks of gas for idling delays as well as stop-and-go traffic. (Google “Waldo Canyon wildfire traffic” & “Portugal—hundreds die in their cars evacuating wildfires.”)

In my updated opinion, four years into concerted efforts of fire fuels mitigation in Palmer Lake, at this point I’m afraid the most important reason to mitigate my own property is probably to get enough volume out to buy enough time to get out.

Nobody’s responsible for fire mitigation on private land except the property owner and his/her designees. There are municipal ordinances pertaining to clearing potential wildfire fuels (e.g. brush and junk), but there is little will to file complaints or to enforce. Or even to take advantage of cost-share grant money to offset costs.

See www.townofpalmerlake.com and search “wildfire risk” for an official map showing all the Palmer Lake lots that are at “extreme risk” of wildfire.

Best bet: Vote in the Colorado June 26 Primary Election and again in November for a new Colorado governor who’s been endorsed by Colorado professional firefighters—trust me: He’s not just another pretty face; his U.S. House voting record and years of successful action prove his will to do something! Plus, he lives in the WUI (Boulder) and understands what we face.

Judith Harrington

Students, not politics, are priority

On Thursday, April 19, D38 school board member Sarah Sampayo abruptly resigned her position via email after facts were brought to light about a meeting she organized in November at State Rep. Paul Lundeen’s house which included prominent figures in the Republican Party, and was attended by the two new members of the D38 School Board who had not yet been sworn in. Chris Taylor confirmed that only the two board members, himself and Tiffney Upchurch, were invited. He felt he needed to attend the meeting as these were the people who got him elected. This information can all be seen and heard on the video of the D38 board meeting which is available on Facebook.

In addition, while acting as a political operative, Sampayo attempted to have the district’s attorney removed on false accusations for which she had to apologize. Thankfully, she was not successful in getting the new board members to go along with corrupt and unethical behavior regarding allowing outside political special interest groups to determine her vote on school board. I hope that with this resignation, the community can come together as one voice for D38 students, teachers, staff, and administration. I am thankful that the remaining board members accepted her resignation, acknowledged that her actions violated board policies, and agreed to separate their political ties from their school board votes on decisions that affect the entire community.

In addition, I am very concerned that State Rep. Paul Lundeen is putting forth a bill which would result in prison time for teachers who protest. Any school board candidate who supports a bill to imprison our teachers can no longer campaign on their commitment to our teachers.

Please support our schools based on what ultimately benefits the students, not based on political affiliation.

Karen M. Heater

D38 transparency

It appears the lack of civility and hatred that grips our entire nation has reached the Tri-Lakes area of El Paso County! This unfortunate trend has been demonstrated by our local school board during the last several meetings. Personal agendas have taken precedence over doing what is right for students and the community.

This agenda-driven ideology was thrust into the limelight this past week with the resignation of one member of the D38 school board. This resignation resulted from alleged personal attacks, exclusion, spreading of disinformation, bullying and emotional abuse! Sounds serious! It is!

In her resignation, Director Sampayo indicated the treatment she received during the January executive sessions was abusive and traumatizing. Accusations of this magnitude must be brought forward for resolution to prevent further division within the community. This can be easily rectified by releasing the recordings of those sessions. During the last board meeting, we were re-

mindful of the importance of the board operating within the parameters set forth by its governing policies—absolutely critical! Again, given that accusations were made regarding policy violations, releasing the recordings is essential. The board can require citizens to engage in legal action costing up to \$10,000 to force the release of the recordings. However, the board can and should release them voluntarily and in good faith. Otherwise, the community will be left with the perception and “their reality” that Sampayo was emotionally abused and that policies were violated?

I implore the D38 school board members to release the January executive session recordings!

Frank John

Explosion?

I am confused by comments made in a letter published in last month’s OCN. Speaking about Lewis-Palmer School District, the writer said, “Their budget also includes a recent explosion of Central Admin to 86 positions—not including paid volunteers” What is your definition of “a recent explosion?” I am aware of five positions being added over the past few years, two of those are part-time, and during this same time frame, two director positions have not been replaced. One more thing: What exactly is a paid volunteer?

Kelly Kempf-Mobley

Kids first, politics last

Lewis-Palmer School District leads the state in graduation rates, ACT scores, Advanced Placement (AP) test scores, and measures of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness. The district is Accredited with Distinction, is on the College Board Advanced Placement Honor Roll, and high school graduates attending college have the some of the lowest remediation rates in the state. On the district’s 2016 Parent Climate Survey, 87 percent of respondents said they were proud to be an LPSD parent or guardian, and 82 percent have confidence in LPSD teachers.

These statistics stand in stark contrast to recent turmoil on the district’s Board of Education. Board member Sarah Sampayo resigned by email on April 19 at 5 p.m., citing a hostile work environment. Although school boards are technically nonpartisan, Sampayo’s allegiance to the Republican Party’s school reform movement was evident throughout her campaign and tenure on the board. Although Sampayo claims that as a board member she pushed for transparency, her resignation came just days after disclosure about her involvement in a meeting in November at Rep. Paul Lundeen’s home designed to direct new board members Chris Taylor and Tiffney Upchurch to push a partisan agenda for the district. During the April 19 school board meeting, board member Taylor accused Sampayo of unethical conduct. Though Taylor attended the partisan meeting, he left when the purpose became clear. The Complete Colorado quotes Taylor as saying, “There were discussions that led me to believe that we were going to act very partisan and take over the school district.”

Lundeen and the members of the District 38 Board of Education must be held accountable for their words and actions. It is time for voters and taxpayers to restate our expectation that school board members make decisions based on what is best for students and not partisan political agendas.

For more detailed information, please see these articles: www.gazette.com/monument-school-board-secretary-resigns-claims-she-was-bullied/article/1624909 and <https://pagetwo.completecolorado.com/2018/04/23/citing-bullying-and-law-violations-district-38-school-board-member-sarah-sampayo-resigns/>

Marie Revak

Wescott Fire needs better tax dollar management

I’m Gary Rusnak and I’m running for the Wescott FPD Board of Directors on May 8, 2018, because change is desperately needed for better management of your tax dollars.

Why the change? Almost every action the current board has taken since the mill levy vote was approved has been the opposite of the justification they used to defend the mill levy increase. By limiting public comment to the start and in the end of meeting, we taxpayers, who the board is supposed to represent, are unable to provide timely input to their actions. We are effectively unable to.

The 2018 budget had to be re-approved in February 2018, because the current board denied public access and open comment before approving it.

I witnessed at the March 20 and April 17 meetings the approval to expend over \$1.3 million of the new-found tax revenue on a Station 2 construction loan pay-off and procurement to replace an existing fire vehicle. This windfall was previously unreported or projected when defending the mill levy increase vote. There has been no thought to banking the surplus to reduce our tax burden.