

## Editorial

Well, while I don't agree with changing things at the last minute and blindsiding your counterparts, Ashburnham Advisory Board Chairman Bill Johnson did something good at Monday's Board of Selectmen's meeting — he got people to talk about something other than how many pencils a department head is going to buy.

Monday's meeting was heated. It was not polite at times. And it was 4 and a half hours long.

Many of the typical budget meetings have everyone sitting reviewing the line items of how much money a department needs to heat their respective buildings, how much it costs to keep the lights on and issues of fuel usage, salaries and more of the details of the budget. This is not to say that these discussions are not needed — they are.

But so are more fundamental discussions that move beyond: "we need to lobby the state for more money," since that only gets everyone so far.

One of the thoughts was proposed by Ashburnham-Westminster Regional Superintendent of Schools Michael Zapantis and reiterated by Selectman Christopher Gagnon. Fire Chief Paul Zbikowski made good points, too.

Zapantis said he thought maybe the town and the schools should go to the town together and asked for a joint override. This way an override would be a combination figure to add public safety officials and school services.

This would help prevent pitting the town versus the schools in a way that a separate override would definitely force. In many of these discussions it seems like it is the town versus the schools — a way of talking that isn't positive for anyone.

Zbikowski said he wasn't allowed to just ask for an override like the schools are able to do when the town won't fund the entire requested budget within the levy limit.

It makes sense that town officials don't support overrides every year for every department or for little things. But maybe it is time to discuss what type of budget increase would be needed to fund the town in a way the department heads would be satisfied with, because who knows better what their jobs entitle than them?

If every year is a bad budget year, then steps must be taken.

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

As National Volunteer Week approaches, I would like to give my deepest thanks to our dedicated Fresh Air hosts, volunteers, and supporters in Ashburnham, Westminster and Ashby. They truly embody the meaning of the 2007 National Volunteer Week theme, "Inspire By Example." Year after year, our volunteers demonstrate their commitment to New York City children by continuing the Fresh Air tradition in the community.

Our caring Fresh Air host families open their homes and share the everyday joys of summertime with their Fresh Air guests. Our local volunteer leaders — many of whom are also hosts — give by serving on our local Friendly Town Committee, planning summer activities, raising funds for special events, publicizing the program and interviewing prospective host families. I would also like to thank all individuals and businesses which have generously given their time and resources to make the Friendly Town program throughout this area a great success each summer.

The Fresh Air Fund, an independent, not-for-profit agency, has provided free summer vacations to more than 1.7 million New York City children since 1877. For more information on how you can help to continue this wonderful tradition of volunteering, please call Sherry Berube at (978) 724-3372 or The Fresh Air Fund at 800-367-0003.

Amanda Cortese  
Fresh Air Fund

### Letters to the Editor Policy

All letters should be no more than 500 words in length, and should include the writer's name, address and phone number.

We will not publish street address, e-mail address or phone number.

Please avoid handwritten letters if at all possible. The editor reserves the right to reject letters or edit for clarity, brevity, good taste and accuracy, and to prevent libel. No poetry, attacks on private individuals, or letter-writing campaigns, please. Due to the volume of mail, writers are asked to limit submissions to one letter every 30 days.

- The Community Journal reserves the right to refuse or hold any submission.

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## COMMUNITY JOURNAL QUESTION OF THE WEEK

*Will you vote in the upcoming state election?*

Yes, of course

No, never

If depends on if I get to it

Cast your vote online at [www.thecommunityjournal.com](http://www.thecommunityjournal.com)

**Results of last week's question:**

*How will you vote on Q1 (wine sold in grocery stores)?*

Yes - 60 percent

No - 40 percent

Undecided - 0 percent



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