

## **Letter: Transparent, Inclusive Process Needed For Choosing a New Election System**

January 03, 2018

Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Perhaps you've also heard of this one, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth."- Abraham Lincoln

To hear it from Port Chester Trustee Gene Ceccarelli, one would think that citizens have no place or voice in the democratic process. Or even worse, that elected officials should not have to hear their words or allow them access.

Unfortunately, it also seems that many of the trustees did not hear the voices of the young people who also spoke at the Dec. 18 meeting. Public speaking ranks high on the list of things many people fear the most. At this meeting, two young men, born and raised in Port Chester, both 22 years old, sucked in their fear and spoke before the board. Not one member of this board was able to see past their own hurt feelings to acknowledge and recognize the presence of these two young people – who represent the future of our village – and country. Not one member of this board stopped to think and say, "Well done, young man. You are the reason we sit here, you are a model for your peers to tear themselves away from their screens and devices if for only a short while to take part in what is your civic right and duty. We applaud your being here."

Not one.

Rather the model that was demonstrated was, "How dare you accuse us of not being transparent." In no one's comments that evening was the phrase, 'you aren't being transparent' uttered. Watch the video.

But let's not allow this to be a distraction from the issue we brought to the attention of the Board two weeks ago: We want an inclusive and transparent process for choosing a new election system. We need a system that will encourage, not discourage participation, one that enfranchises, not disenfranchises, one that empowers all communities in the village, not just the privileged few.

We applaud the village for hiring Dr. Lisa Handley. We only want everyday residents of Port Chester to have a chance to work with her so that the selection of a new electoral system benefits from both her expertise and the voices of the people who will be doing the voting.

So, as we approach the commemoration of the birth of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., how do we reconcile all that Dr. King stood for with Trustee Ceccarelli's outburst against popular democracy and civic participation?

**Joan Grangenois-Thomas**, Port Chester

*Joan Grangenois-Thomas is Executive Director of the Sustainable Port Chester Alliance.*

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