

Greetings,

As my name was mentioned at the Mill River Board meeting last night in reference to a hearing held on March 19, 2021 by the Senate Committee on Government Operations I feel compelled to provide some clarification:

In the discussion of appointing a citizen from Clarendon to fill the current vacancy on the Mill River Board, Bruce Moreton stated that at the above-mentioned committee hearing the chair of Sen Gov Ops said that the Mill River Board should "...defer to the selectboard, to strongly defer to the selectboard..."

The statement from Senator White at the end of the hearing was actually: "I would suggest at this point the Mill River Board give deference, give strong deference – not necessarily let them make the decision – but to the Clarendon Selectboard and really try to work with them so that they feel they have had, the residents of Clarendon have had their voices heard, and I don't think that should be that difficult..."

There is a difference between "defer to": To allow (someone else) to decide or choose something, and "give deference to": To show respect and esteem. Ordinarily this would be a small point, but these are far from ordinary times. There were two board members who were clearly on the fence about voting for one candidate or another; one eventually said he would go with the two Clarendon board members to support them. Did Bruce's statement influence the final outcome of the vote? Perhaps...perhaps not. I won't say that's not important now, but I will say it's not as important as the board moving forward and settle in to the business of helping to ensure our students have high-quality educational opportunities at a cost taxpayers can support.

And it requires strong leadership to make that happen in a balanced manner, to make sure all voices are heard. On that, Adrienne Raymond deserves commendation for circling back to the board member who had first abstained – the third representative from Clarendon – to give him another opportunity to weigh in when the vote was at a tie when she would have been within her rights to break the tie herself. This alone shows her to be the quintessential chair, but to maintain such a level of integrity after being the subject of an informal hearing just minutes before is truly extraordinary. You, and all members of the district, are lucky to have her.

As I have stated in the past, is my sincere hope that citizens of all the towns of the Mill River District can put the divisiveness that has developed over the past few months behind us, and we all can work together for the greater good.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Fredette