

# Opinion

## MY VIEW

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### My View

By Glenn Field

Assistant to the Superintendent for Business

### THE NANTUCKET PUBLIC SCHOOL BUDGET The Development Process

January finds the school system nearly at the end of its budget preparation for the 2009 fiscal year. The Nantucket Public School budget planning process spans eight months and begins a year prior to its implementation in the system; it includes computers and fuel oil, text books and sheet music, to mention just a few items. It is varied and it is complicated; it takes time to go over the requests and to analyze new pro-

posals. The following is an explanation of the process, a look at "how we get there from here."

Once the budget is approved it is a "fait accompli," with all its funds allocated or earmarked for specific purposes; these allocations reflect the result of extensive reviews conducted over many months by all stakeholders. The Nantucket School Committee and school administration take a leadership role in the process. Input is also gathered from school councils and staff. At the heart of each year's process is an extensive review of current programming, staff placement, projected enrollment, and potential new initiatives.

The amount of funding is limited, therefore current programs and requested new proposals must be weighed and then prioritized, so that those initiatives that are most needed and most beneficiary to the stu-

dents are funded. Since Nantucket's school system has responsibility for all students, the budget must fund programs for all our learners. In this context, the public school must be a 'supermarket' of educational opportunity offering AP courses for college bound students, as well as courses for students whose future will involve the industrial technologies, carpentry, culinary arts, auto repair and consumer sciences.

During the eight month budget development phase, each department head, building principal and/or director, presents his/her budget to the School Committee in public session. The Committee questions and analyzes how all the requests align with goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan and the system-wide goals for the year. They determine how each department's or school's requests meets its

See MY VIEW, page 7

## LETTERS

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### IN REBUTTAL

#### To the editor:

We would like to correct several serious errors in Peter Brace's front page article in the 12/26/07 issue of *The Nantucket Independent*, headlined "Ethics Questioned."

At no point did we say that the Nantucket

Preservation Trust doing a report on historic houses in 'Sconset was "unethical." Of course the NPT can, and should, do studies of Nantucket's historic structures. And we believe we said very clearly that surely we would all agree on the importance of preserving them, although not necessarily on the best is more likely-to-succeed methods of accomplishing this.

What we addressed, specifically, was not the report itself, but its *use*, as part of a preservation *team*, for the 'Sconset Beach Preservation Fund's seeming advantage, before a town board (the Conservation Commission) during a decision-making hearing, and being paid to do so. This is a very important distinction.

This distinction was immediately apparent to, first, the person in the audience who asked the question: Was NPT paid by the SBPF to do this survey? Mr. May's answer was: Yes. The following even more critical question was: Was the

NPT's Executive Director, Michael May, therefore making this presentation as part of the SBPF's team? The answer, again, was: Yes.

Mr. May's statement, therefore, in Peter Brace's article, that NPT was not part of the SBPF's team, is in direct contradiction of his own words as shown on the video of the meeting.

The issue of conflict of interest was obvious — to the questioner, to us, and to quite a few other people who expressed themselves to us about this, and who agreed with our first letter of 12/19/07.

This is not a matter of what Cheryl Bartlett refers to as a nonprofit supporting another nonprofit. As we said in our earlier letter, our nonprofit organizations are not meant to be part of a team arguing for a project before town boards, in return for payment, nor should this be the impression given. This is a clear conflict of interest, as payment puts impartiality squarely in question.

Sincerely,

— Reva & Mort Schlesinger

See LETTERS, page 7

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