

## Town Meeting

12-15-11

### TOWN MEETING

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#### Precursors:

- SAB - no.
- Staff Mtg - no.

#### Announcements:

- Holiday toy drive continues. Please get an unwrapped toy to the Main Office by TOMORROW
- Apparel sales now! Today is the --last-- day - Buy apparel. There are t-shirts with Elly on them. There are some forms in the library.
- Make-up picture day is TODAY.
- Candy Cane sales today through 12/20 @ lunch
- Death of a Salesman opens \*tonight\*, runs through Saturday - Everyone should see it.
- Volleyball Tourney - get a team together and sign up with a PE teacher asap!
- Winter Semi-Formal - Class of 2012 - No motion yet but there will be a Mardi Gras themed dance on Feb 10<sup>th</sup>

#### Motions:

- None listed

#### Discussion:

- Crumple tag censorship - Dave Soles. This is something that is really HBW. It is zany fun and student organized. HBW was founded to be a place to let our students be more free. There are some things that are inappropriate but this is not one of them. This is more than about crumple tag, but we need a discussion on under what circumstances an administrator can act unilaterally and stop an activity. Once we come up with those guidelines we can decide whether or not it was appropriate. (Sophomores & Juniors were pulled out of TM at this point for PSAT results ... discussion was tabled until their return. Discussion on the next topic ended up merging with this one.)
- Freedom of Expression - Delaney Steffen and Mary Shields. They put bible verses on their lockers as a way to encourage each other. They were asked to take them down. HBW is a place to be accepted. It is not really offensive. I wouldn't do it myself but I have no problem with it. As long as it's student led there is no issue with it. These are not permanent so they can be easily taken down. The two discussions are about freedom of expression and separation of church and state. As long as it is student led. This is protected speech under the constitution. Unfortunately we don't get to choose whether or not people are offended but people have the right to express what they think or feel. Censorship is an issue of concern at HBW. We are a tolerant community. Profanity is not protected speech but this is. These issues (bible verses, crumple tag) have to do with moments not with trends. HBW has freedom of expression and there is a lot of support for this. This is a good way to express ourselves. If it is not religious messages there would be less of an uproar. Would having it inside the locker would it be better? Last year we embraced the student's individuality when they requested a space to meditate/pray, etc. We have accommodated Muslim students who needed to do their daily devotions. We accept the writings on the wall why can't we accept this? If we tolerate the writing than we can tolerate this. Some of the wall writing is offensive and we would rather see the bible verses than see the profanity. Peoples' feelings were hurt and they spoke up. How many people felt offended by the bible verses? A teacher told the students they found it offensive. We all are more likely to get upset now in this is the winter season, it's dark, people are busy and rushed. Tis the season to lack patience because we lack sunlight. We are a

community of the young and they tend to be more liberal because they lack power in society. We are a community that has a high level of suspicion for dominant power, in this case it is Christianity. It is OK for people to be offended, you can't please everybody. Last year someone decided to follow an old Jewish tradition and wore a yarmulke for a month and no one got offended so they should not be offended now. A healthy part of democracy is not always bowing to authority. We should be suspicious of authority as this suspicion is what makes democracy work. People wearing underwear on their head is kind of weird but it should not be shut down. A lot of this is an age thing. It is neat to have this as a distraction in the cold winter months. But if a teacher asked you to take the underwear off of the head in the class should you? There have been times when people have pushed against authority more than others. There should be more discussions like this. The crumple tag people were not forced to make the announcement but they decided to because of the perceived authority. A school does have the right to preserve order. The expression of free speech is different than secular education. If a teacher had atheist quotes on their wall or wore a burka would others be offended? Culture allows people to express themselves and Christianity is not necessarily conservative. Welcomed the idea of a prayer space. Embracing a room where Muslims could pray was tolerant but embracing Christians is conservative. Student was upset because she was unable to express herself. Most people seem to think that the quotes were fine. Many people are offended by a teacher imposing their will on freedom of expression. What people wear is their own business and people have the right to practice their own religions. In France there is no display of religion. Why is it more offensive for a teacher to display religion than a student to do it? What court cases have been decided about freedom of religion? People should respect all religions including Christianity and atheism. But people should be able to express their values without fear of persecution. We have had a Dalai Lama speak at the school. Religious music is at the school. Teachers are the authority figures of the school so they should not impose religion on people. There is the freedom of the individual and the power of authority. When teachers endorse a religion then it is seen as an authority when a student endorses a religion it is protected as the individual. There aren't many schools where you can put up where you want on a locker so there aren't many court cases to guide us. Authority is allowed to make a persuasive case but when can they make a unilateral statement?

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Chair: Robi Rahman

Co-Chair: Quinn Romanek

Secretary: John Ponder White