

Letter to the Editor: Open and Honest

Tessa Kirchner

I had the privilege of sitting on the Eagle County Schools Citizens Budget Committee this past year. The District took the opportunity to engage some very actively involved business community members in a series of conversations related to District funds, employee compensation, health care costs, school operating costs, programs and initiatives in place and many other topics.

Governmental agencies should be transparent, responsible in terms of how they report their spending and what, specifically, they are spending tax payer dollars on. I believe that Eagle County Schools has done that by entertaining conversations on several occasions specific to budget-related information (case in point: creating the Budget Committee), displaying this information on their website and encouraging on-going dialogue with various community members.

There is a perception out there that Eagle County Schools is spending dollars outside of the classroom. I called the District to get clarification on this, as I too was surprised at some of the claims.

Check register items exist for restaurants, movie tickets and t-shirt printing companies. These individual school expenses, which are primarily spent on food, travel and field trips, are fronted by the school's activity accounts and then reimbursed by families or PTAs. For example: travel charges for the Battle Mountain High School Band, reimbursed by the families of those students; hand-made Kindergarten t-shirts by Gypsum Elementary School students, paid for by parents of those children; and teacher appreciation gifts at Meadow Mountain Elementary School and Gypsum Creek Middle School, paid for by the PTA.

I have found Eagle County Schools to be open and honest in terms of its spending. Does the District believe that, as long as families help off-set the costs, students should take part in field trips or other enrichment opportunities for the learning experience? You bet. Does the District encourage open dialogue on anything and everything? Without a doubt. Instead of further fueling the 'rumor mill' fire, I urge you to call or email any of the District Leadership Team members or Board of Education representatives. They would be more than happy to answer your questions.

There are some who want to taut "responsible spending by government" as a reason against 3B. I agree, we should all act responsibly. Responsibility in voting means knowing the facts, so I urge you to know the facts of THIS school district, don't act irresponsibly by trying to lump all political arguments together. This school district is acting and spending responsibly AND accomplishing great results with amazing programs. This district has intelligent, innovative, passionate employees all working diligently for the success of our community. I am an interested parent of three children in our district, I have been attending BOE meetings for four years and for many years PTA, SAC, DAC, WWD, PEP and Committee for Old BMHS use. The information is available to everyone, meetings are open, discussions are happening. You just need to want the facts, not the easy-to-come-by rhetoric.