

To: Kensington Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Kensington Residents

Prepared by: Holly McCann, Kensington Resident

Re: Re-Appointment of Donna Carter to the Kensington Park & Social Committee

I find no pleasure in presenting this statement before the BOS and the public. I feel strongly against waging a battle of words on Facebook pages or via emails. My motivation for taking this step is grounded in a desire to bring out “the other side of the story” as other Kensington residents urged me to do months ago. I could not then, and still have reservations about doing so now, but as I see Donna Carter being reappointed to a Trust Agreement Committee, as an interim Trust Board member, and now seeking reappointment to the Recreation Committee, I realized that I needed to present my information – if for no other reason than to set the record straight.

I was a member of the Kensington Rec Committee for over two years. I volunteered at the time just before Jodie Lefebvre and Leslie DeSesto left due to work and family commitments. I also served as a member of the Kensington Sawyer Park Trust from April 2017 through June 2018. In addition, I volunteered the past two years, working for Kathy Felch & the BOS to schedule the Park athletic fields. In 2018, I volunteered my serve in the role of the Kensington Summer Camp Coordinator role to ensure we could offer the Summer Camp at the Park. I wrote Rec Committee Community News Articles, responded to inquiries to the Town Offices, and prepared the majority of Rec Committee meeting minutes. I regularly attended meetings & briefed the BOS on Rec Comm activities and needs.

I do not offer this information for recognition purposes, but only to lend context and hopefully, credibility to my statements that follow.

When I joined the committee in 2016 there was an administrative process to our monthly meetings. We conducted the business at hand, accepted assignments/responsibilities directed toward accomplishment of the activities/programs, and made smart use of the limited time we had. After Ms. Lefebvre and Ms. Del Sesto left at end of 2016, the meetings began to falter. We had no officers, no clear chain of command, no organized plan to attract new members, and meetings tended to be a discussion of “old times and the way we have always done things”, or a discussion about how “the BOS did not understand the way we do things”. Suggestions for change were met with a response from Donna that she was interested in what she had been doing, and not in adding events or programming geared toward other age groups.

The following are examples of situations experienced working with Donna. Others exist, but are left out in the interest of time.

Donna was the senior member on a Committee that executed contracts committing Town funds from both Revolver and Budgeted funds without prior approval by BOS. This violated a 2009 Warrant Article #9 passed in 2010 per annual report.

Donna knowingly diverted town income by (1) advising certain residents that they did not have to pay their activity fees if they would serve a role in a Rec Committee event. While this may seem trivial to some, it was beyond her authority to “pay” people for services that are traditionally voluntary services, (2) She served on the Trust board that made a side agreement with Exeter Jr Baseball whereby they did

not have to pay the rental fee for field use in exchange for their participation in the upkeep of fields. The organization confirmed to me that the agreement was made. In 2018 they began paying their fees again.

Donna refused to take a turn in preparing the monthly meeting minutes – saying she did not have time.

Donna assigned herself role of Treasurer of Rec Committee, reflecting such on the Town web page, with no election or assignment made; then took position the Committee did not need (or ever have) other officer roles when asked about this.

During 2018, when Summer Camp Program was in danger of not being offered, Donna stated in an email that I was “recreating the wheel” when I took the Counselor Handbook, Family Handbook, and the various medical forms and updated them. This effort included discussions with Police Chief, Fire Chief, and BOS to ensure we had sufficient coverage for medical conditions, emergency conditions that might occur at the park, etc. More work needs to be done in future for potential for active shooter situations, and potential for bullying incidents.

Donna was complicit in a conversation that took place at Sawyer Trust meeting in October of 2017 where members voice their desire to not put Adult Softball fees/funds into the Town Revolver Account, because the “BOS would spend the money on other Rec Programs.” Subsequently in 2018, the Trust, including Donna and Dave Macek (Town appointees to the Trust) voted to have the Trust sponsor adult softball instead of the Rec Committee. I was still a member of the Trust at this time but was absent that night and was to present for the discussion or the vote. When informed of the action, I sent fellow Trust members an email, which was promptly posted on Kensington Squawks to create negative discussion.

As a volunteer scheduling the athletic fields in 2017, I found discrepancies between the stated policies of Park rentals and the actual accounts in the Revolver Fund. I asked a lot of questions, including Donna Carter and Dave Macek in the email stream. I wanted to know why funds were not deposited into the Town fund accounts according to the policy/practice that Dave Macek communicated to me in an email on July 20, 2017. Answers I received were confusing and not on point to answer the questions. I dug deeper, contacting the Exeter Junior Baseball/Softball organizations and received information. I felt obligated to refer this matter to the BOS and ultimately to the Town Auditors. When a discrepancy arose over Town sponsorship of Adult Basketball (from a liability standpoint) I included the BOS in the email discussion, and was called “childish and mean” by Ms. Carter. I believed my responsibility was to share my findings with the BOS who were elected to represent the citizens of Kensington. I did so, and would do so again today.

I received a Facebook message awhile back that said, “I have nothing against you personally, you are probably a nice person, but I can’t stand by and let selfless volunteers be run out of service”. This person was a main contributor to the Kensington Squawks page. My reaction to this statement is – I agree we should not disparage or discourage those who volunteer their time and expertise to the Town – but (1) there are many who serve in this fashion who should be valued for their service, (2) anyone who steps into this role should recognize there are RSA, rules, policies, etc that govern public entities. They must be respected and followed by all.

In closing, I agree that Donna, along with many other folks, has volunteered her time to the Town. She held a position in the Sawyer Kensington Trust and served on the Rec Committee for many years. Unfortunately, serving many years can bring an attitude that corners can be cut, influence can be brought to bear, and new ideas can be pushed aside. It is time for new blood in these efforts. It is time for some fresh ideas, new partnering efforts with other Kensington organizations such as Historical Society and Library, and a greater role by the KES PTO perhaps relating to programs. It is welcome to have individual event/program volunteers, but the Rec Committee and the BOS must have information and oversight of Committee activities and sponsored programs to ensure they are working as intended and that appropriate protections for the Town area in place.

What the BOS does in regard to Rec Committee appointments is beyond my control. I leave here tonight firm in my belief that I gave my best to the Town in the roles I served, and that the public needs to have a full picture of the facts, not just a Facebook discussion among people who did not have (or seem to care about) all the facts.

I thank you for your willingness to allow me this time to speak. I ask you to attach this prepared statement to the BOS Meeting Minutes for this date (November 5, 2018).

Holly McCann