

Weekend Citizen of Laconia

THE VOICE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE'S LAKES REGION

www.citizen.com

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, September 14-15, 2013

School superintendent responds to concession stand controversy

By KRISTA MARRS

kmarrs@citizen.com

LACONIA — The superintendent of schools has reached out to the Laconia Kiwanis Club, hoping to clarify the decision on who will run the concession stand during home football games — a topic that is still not sitting well with Kiwanians.

While acknowledging that the fall season has begun and

no changes will be made to allow the Key Club to run the concession stand, Kiwanis Club President Scott Laurent said he is hoping taxpayers will take notice and continue to urge school and city officials to set forth a policy on terms of use.

“We’re not completely satisfied,” said Laurent of the letter from Superintendent of Schools Terri Forsten.

In a letter dated Sept. 10,

Forsten offered clarification on the issue, which she wrote was in collaboration with School Board Chairman Joe Cormier.

Forsten stated in her letter that she understood Key Club advisors met with LHS school administrators in June to review the many options for the concession stand this fall.

“They reportedly were interested in three dates when

large crowds are expected to be in attendance at the stadium — Homecoming games on Sept. 28 and Division IV Soccer Semifinals for Nov. 6 and 7. There are additional soccer and field hockey games available for this fall if Key Club is interested in more dates for the concession stand,” Forsten wrote. “It was clearly communicated at the

See STAND, A5

STAND

From Page A1

June meeting that home football games were not an option as those had been given to another community organization.”

Forsten noted that, with the new athletic stadium, there are a number of other sporting events that “we predict will offer as strong a fundraising venue as football games.”

Forsten said the School District is responsible for coordinating the concession stand and they will be reviewing the schedule annually.

The teen counterpart to the Laconia Kiwanis Club — the Key Club — is a high school student-run organization to help members build leadership skills, character and offer service opportunities.

For more than 60 years the Key Club has run the concession stand at the home football games at LHS. Laconia Youth Football leaders pledged \$10,000 toward the cost of the renovation and expansion project in exchange for being able to run the concession stand during the home football games. The monies raised in essence raised about 80 percent of the club’s budget.

However, now with the new stadium in place, the decision has been made to allow other organizations to run the concessions during these games. By doing so, the Kiwanis Club contends that a majority of the Key Club’s funding has been cut.

Despite the letter, Laurent said the Kiwanis Club has many questions that it feels still remain unanswered.

“We’ve been told ‘everyone knew.’ Who’s ‘everyone?’” said Laurent.

“Not as a member of the Kiwanis but as a taxpayer I have questions about the terms of use policy,” he said.

Some of the questions Laurent said he had relating to the agreement to allow LRYF to run the concessions during the home football game include was it an appropriate transaction? Was the \$10,000 a cash donation or was it a contractual item based upon future profits earned? If so, how long are the terms of the contract?

“As a taxpayer, I really don’t like what went on,”

he said.

As president of the Kiwanis Club, Laurent said the organization has had a good relationship with the school district — another reason why club members feel taken aback by this change.

“Kiwanis is involved in the schools. We want to be a partner of the school administration,” he said. “We want them to be a partner and we want to be able to trust them.”

Laurent said club members did meet with the Key Club students who pledge to keep moving forward despite this incident.

“They’re an optimistic group of kids. They want to find other ways to make up the money,” said Laurent, adding “It’s up to the Key Club if they want to take those (proposed dates) on” to run the concessions.

The Key Club will continue to operate, said Laurent, but club members might have to scale back on some of their events. In the past the group has participated in Habitat for Humanity projects and matched donations collect-

ed for the Salvation Army’s Turkey Plunge. The funds raised by Key Club members were used for lodging, transportation costs as well as civic donations.

“I think they’ll still move forward,” Laurent said. “They might just have to change some of the things they can do.”

In an e-mail message sent to the Laconia School Board dated Aug. 20 Laurent said the Kiwanis were “absolutely bewildered” and “very disappointed” by the decision to eliminate the Key Club from operation of the concession stand.

During the Sept. 3 meeting of the Laconia School Board, Chairman Cormier admitted that there was miscommunication on the issue due to change in personnel and the hiring of a new superintendent of schools.

Since there is nothing the Kiwanis or Key Club can do at this point to have school officials change their decision, Laurent said he is hopeful taxpayers will take on the issue and continue to demand answers.

“This was a big mistake. I would like to see the issue continue to be brought up, but we’re going to leave it up to the taxpayers,” he said. “We’ve brought an issue to light.”