

EDITORIAL

Food for thought in the concession decision

The celebration and fanfare around the opening of the new athletic stadium at Laconia High School has brought to light a loophole or possible lack of policy regarding the operation of the concession stand.

For 60 years the Key Club, the teen counterpart to the Laconia Kiwanis Club, has run the concession stand during the home football games. The high school student-run organization to help members build leadership skills, character and offer service opportunities raised nearly all of its funding — representing about \$3,000 — from the concessions.

This year, however, that won't be happening.

Leaders of Laconia Youth Football Association pledged \$10,000 toward the cost of the building renovation and expansion project at LHS in exchange for being able to run the concessions at the home football games.

While School Board Chairman Joe Cormier and Ward 2 City Councilor Matt Lahey — both whom sat on the Building and Renovation Committee — have said that Kiwanians were told of this decision earlier this year, Kiwanis President Scott Laurent said that is not the case.

In an e-mail sent to the School Board on Aug. 20, Laurent said the Kiwanis were “absolutely bewildered” and “very disappointed” by the decision to eliminate the Key Club from running the concessions at home football games. He had said he was told back in April that no final decision had been made at that point by then Superintendent of Schools Bob Champlin.

Cormier acknowledged at the Sept. 3 School Board meeting a “miscommunication” and that he should've followed up on the issue to ensure that everyone was aware of the change.

Kiwanis Club members have stated that seemingly a school-based organization has been pushed out of a golden fundraising opportunity at a school event in favor of a group that is a not-for-profit football league that has no affiliation with the Laconia School District. It does appear to be the case and doesn't seem to make sense.

At this point the decision has been made. It is obvious no change will be made to allow the Key Club to take over this year. The question is: Where do we go from here?

It is critical that this sort of “miscommunication” does not happen again. A clear policy outlining the terms of use of the facility and ownership of the facility is needed.

Superintendent of Schools Terri Forsten stated in a letter to the Laconia Kiwanis that the School District is responsible for coordinating the concession stand and that the schedule will be reviewed annually.

It would also be helpful to have more information provided about the \$10,000 donation from LYFA — was it a cash donation? What is a profit-sharing deal and if so, what is the term of the contract for the pledge of future profits?

The Key Club will likely still be in the concession booth later this month and in November for a limited number of non-football events, but whether or not students will be able to take part in the same number of community service activities as in the past remains unknown.

It would be a good faith gesture by the Laconia Youth Football organization to make a donation to the Key Club, perhaps a percentage of the proceeds raised through the concessions this year at the home football games to ensure at least one positive comes out of this messy decision.