

Water bill no place for library politicking

About two weeks ago, I received my Westfield Water and Sewer bill. Inserted into the envelope was an “info-mercial” from a private group of individuals advocating their political position on the library’s proposed move. I must admit, I was surprised, disappointed and troubled that the “info-mercial” was within the publicly funded mailing.

About two years ago, the Westfield Town Council decided to allow preprinted inserts to be placed in the water and sewer bills. This decision was made for two reasons; 1. to better inform Westfield citizens of issues and programs going on in our community, and; 2. to try to reduce the postage costs of those government agencies that affect our citizen’s lives. It was agreed that all government agencies would have access to this program, with final content approval maintained by the town of Westfield for the above stated reasons. It was never implied or intended for personal or private groups to have access to this program. In fact, the issue of personal or private was discussed and unanimously excluded.

As a taxpayer, I believe this was an irresponsible and inappropriate use of public funds. Furthermore, I believe it was an irresponsible and inappropriate action by the two persons involved in the request and placement of this “info-mercial.” Each of them should know better based on the positions they hold on the library board and town council, respectively.

As restitution, I believe the private group should be required to reimburse Westfield Public Works, effectively the public rate payers, the retail costs associated with this mailing. This would include but, not be limited to, the envelopes, printing, folding and stuffing, as well as the postage at a cost of 41 cents per mailed envelope. Recognizing these costs would have been realized by the group had they mailed this sheet for themselves, they should be held liable for all these costs.

Finally, yes, I have taken a position on the library issue but, this editorial isn’t about the Remonstrance Process. This editorial is about accountability, responsibility and trust. Citizens should be able to feel confident that all monies collected by governmental agencies are being used appropriately and not for self-serving political causes.

Sincerely,

Ron Thomas,
Westfield Town Council