

Absenteeism and Secret Texts

Dear Editor,

In a letter in the SJS last week Lisa McKenzie states that Councilman Jay Byars, "leads . . . by example." That is contradicted by his record, as shown in part just this last month:

4/7/14 County Council meeting- ABSENT; 4/14/14 BCD Council of Governments meeting- ABSENT; 4/21/14 Water and Sewer Committee meeting- ABSENT; 4/22/14 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, Chairman-ABSENT

Byar's absenteeism is a poor example of leadership, is not even "followship" and certainly is not "Walking the Walk". Failure to attend these meetings is failure to represent the people of District 7, because he is not casting votes, not getting information and not giving a voice for the citizens who elected him. Since his election, he has missed or arrived late at 10% of County Council meetings (not counting Committee meetings). What would happen to any of us if we missed work or came in late 10% of the time?

Informed voters want to know why Byars is an "Absentee Councilman." Incumbent Byars is PAID BY THE TAXPAYERS to attend the meetings he is missing. TO BE A LEADER, YOU FIRST HAVE TO SHOW UP!

Voters also want to know why Byars, along with Councilman David Chinnis, routinely sends and receives secret text messages during the Council meetings he does attend; why they will not disclose those texts to the public even though they are public records under the Freedom of Information Act; and why on November 4, 2013 they voted to prevent Councilman Larry Hargett from introducing a resolution to ban or regulate texting by them and other Councilmen during Council meetings. This secret messaging by Byars and Chinnis not only is poor leadership but disrespects and insults the taxpayers attending the meetings. Voters should know what communications Byars is sending and receiving from special interests and other Councilman as Byars conducts public business. Voters should know who directs Byars' and Chinnis' votes.

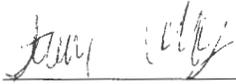
In contrast, Lester Dempsey would attend 100% of meetings, based on his 12 year record, and would allow no texting to and from Councilmen during public meetings. Lester's civic volunteerism and contributions to our community are simply overwhelming. As a community leader, often as a chairperson, he has advocated trimming budgets and opposed tax increases. He has played a key role in numerous management successes, including obtaining funding for local roads from the State Department of Transportation's highly competitive funds. When not attending meetings on his own time, Lester used flex time and his vacation leave to attend 100% of dozens volunteer meetings. Lester Dempsey truly "Walks the walk".

While Lester Dempsey vigorously and successfully opposed the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), Byars voted for and supported that sales tax increase on food and other items. Thus, Byars wants us ordinary citizens to pay 1% more for food costs that already have risen 19% this past year and will double by the end of this decade. According to the Dorchester County Taxpayers Association the LOST tax "takes from those who can least afford it and shifts the tax

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credits to the rich who need it the least. The benefit in property taxes on a modest \$100,000 home (in the County) would be \$38! Buy \$150 in groceries a week and you will pay an additional \$78 in taxes. [Councilman Byars voted to hold] this critical referendum when there is no county wide election. That ensures low voter turnout and increased costs." The low voter turnout tended to favor the supporters of LOST and cost the County taxpayers approximately \$30,000, the annual salary of one County employee. LOST was defeated by a 3-1 margin proving Byars is out of touch with the constituents he is supposed to be representing.

These are facts about the performance of Byars and are not personal. He has missed important County meetings and supported a huge tax increase. Lester Dempsey is a problem solver by trade, has been a volunteer community leader for 12 years, would be an effective representative of the people instead of just special interests and opposes tax increases. That's why people should vote for Lester Dempsey.



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