

Soccer not on Laurel's school board agenda

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On Tuesday, seven supporters of the Laurel Soccer Club sat through the school board's monthly meeting quietly, waiting.

Their subject never came up. "It's absurd," said Vincent Bejgrowicz, club president. He said he had written to the board Sept. 19, requesting permission to speak about adding soccer to the district's

SILENCED President of the Laurel

Soccer Club claims district's school board will not allow him to speak at the meetings.

ON THE WEB

► More information about the Laurel Soccer Club is available at its Web site, which is: www.laurelsoccerclub.com.

there was nothing else he could do. So Bejgrowicz enlisted the services of attorney Jonathan Solomon.

In a letter now posted on the club's Web site, Solomon wrote to Dr. Sandra Hennon, the district

superintendent, challenging the legality of the refusal.

"I am told that your reply to his request related the pronouncement of the board president, Mr. (Timothy) Redfoot, that the board has heard all they need on the subject of soccer, and that neither Mr. Bejgrowicz nor any one else will be permitted to address the board any

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further on the matter," it said in part.

The letter quoted sections of the Pennsylvania Constitution giving residents "reasonable opportunity at each advertised regular meeting and advertised special meeting ... to comment on matters of concern ... which are or may be before the board ..."

Hennon confirmed yesterday the board had received both letters, noting Solomon's was in the hands of the district solicitor, Charles Mansell.

"We do follow the rules and the laws and the regulations regarding who may or may not speak to the board," she said, declining further comment.

Mansell said yesterday he had responded to Solomon on Tuesday, but disagrees with Solomon's interpretation.

"I think the law says we have to permit the resident or taxpayer to participate relative to any subject which is or is likely to come before the board," Mansell said.

He added the board has made no motion to consider or discuss the issue, despite the soccer club's numerous attempts to raise it.

Since "not one" board member shows any inclination to address the soccer issue, Mansell said, the subject is not likely to go before the board.

Solomon said yesterday morning he had not received Mansell's response, and hadn't spoken with his client about whether Bejgrowicz plans to pursue the matter.

"There's no word 'likely' in the statute," Solomon said. "As my letter says, if the board can say to its citizens, 'You may only address us on issues that are on our agenda,' how are they going to persuade the board to put anything on the agenda that they don't want on their agenda?"

"They (the board members) don't have to do what these people want them to do, but they do have to

allow them to participate in the democratic process," Solomon said.

If Bejgrowicz wants to pursue this, Solomon said, his advice would be to get aggressive, either with a lawyer or otherwise.

After the meeting, soccer mom Anne Mariani expressed surprise at the silence of the club members.

"I've never been to a school board meeting before, and I can't believe how closed-minded (the board members) are," said Mariani, after Bejgrowicz and others had explained the situation to her. Her two children, also at the meeting, are elementary students who play soccer in the club.

Bejgrowicz said Tuesday night that he did plan to keep working for soccer in Laurel schools, but he was n't sure what form that would take.

And, he said, he needs help from parents, players and concerned residents.