

# Reconfiguration Flap in Reg. 14

By REBECCA RANSOM

WOODBURY—A PTO member claims she was wrongly ousted from the volunteer organization for her stand on the controversial Region 14 elementary schools reconfiguration plan.

On Monday, a seven-year PTO veteran and vice president of the Mitchell Elementary School PTO in Woodbury, Pam Racevicius, was voted off after refusing to take a leave of absence.

Last fall, the Region 14 Board of Education, serving the towns of Woodbury and Bethlehem, voted to reconfigure the elementary schools. The plan, which will take effect in next academic year, will have all students in kindergarten through second grade going to Bethlehem Elementary School and all students in grades three through five going to Mitchell Elementary School in Woodbury.

Higher grades move onto a regional

middle and high school in Woodbury. Currently, elementary students attend the school in their town, though a number of students who live near town lines attend the school closest to their homes.

According to Mrs. Racevicius, at an executive PTO board meeting Jan. 11, she was asked to step down temporarily, "until next year when reconfiguration goes through." She said Mitchell principal John Salatto was present.

Mrs. Racevicius refused to step down, and at Monday's executive meeting she was removed from her elected office on the PTO. She believes that she has been singled out and removed due to her vocal anti-configuration stand.

"It was told to me that it is not appropriate for me to be a member of Families for Region 14 Elementary (a grassroots anti-reconfiguration group), to be outspoken about the reconfigura-

tion at Board of Education meetings, to wear a pin that says 'Save Region 14 Elementary' and to talk about reconfiguration with other parents," Mrs. Racevicius said.

While she admits to her vocal stand against reconfiguration, she insists she has never identified herself as a PTO member while campaigning against reconfiguration or used the PTO as a vehicle to further her opinions.

"I have been told that it is not during PTO functions that is in question, but when I am outside of Mitchell and a member of the Woodbury community," she said. "But there is nothing in the Mitchell School PTO bylaws to support that claim. In fact, nowhere in the PTO bylaws does it state that a parent is not entitled to their opinion or that they are prohibited in any way from advancing their opinion in any public forum outside the PTO."

She also claims that between the Jan. 11 meeting and Monday's session, the minutes of the meeting were changed to cast the PTO board and Region 14

administration in a better light. She also believes the issue represents a conflict of interest for the PTO president, Natalie Catalano, whose husband, Sal, is on the Board of Education.

Mrs. Racevicius has contacted Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's office on the matter and is considering legal action.

The recent events have some other parents concerned that their opinions might affect their role in the community. "I am just shocked by the whole thing because we are just volunteers," said Bethlehem school PTO vice president Christine DeCicco. "For this to become so political for the PTO ... we're just there for the kids."

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Robert Cronin and Board Chairman John Howard both said they had no prior knowledge of the situation before Mrs. Racevicius brought it up at the last board meeting.

Mr. Salatto could not be reached for comment. Mrs. Catalano did not return phone calls seeking comment.



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