



Town of Sanford, Maine
Office of the Town Manager
919 Main Street, Sanford, Maine 04073
(207) 324-9173 Fax (207) 324-9124

Town Council

Joseph R. Hanslip, Chairperson
Kevin J. Chabot, Vice Chairman
Gordon N. Paul
Anne Marie Mastraccio
Bradford J. Littlefield
Alan R. Walsh
Richard L. Wilkins

March 24, 2010

Ms. Helen Wilkins, Chair
29 Sherburne St
Sanford, ME 04073

Dear Helen,

At the Town Council's meeting on March 23rd I was directed to send the Finance Committee a letter expressing our concern over the small group meetings being held by the Finance Committee. When I spoke with you and other members of the Finance Committee at your March 18th meeting I expressed my concern and the concern of my fellow Councilors regarding the Finance Committee's recent practice of meeting as a small group at the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the budget.

As you know the budget is the single most important project that we do each year. Consequently the work on this document must be done in an open forum where interested citizens have every opportunity to be involved and informed. Meeting as a small group in a room that can barely accommodate the entire Finance Committee let alone members of the press and public just doesn't meet the high standard the budget review process requires.

It is also important for you to know that a strong majority of the Town Council feels that these small group meetings are a violation of the Right to Know law and that your continued insistence in holding them may be placing the entire budget process in jeopardy. We also feel that you are specifically violating the Finance Committee Ordinance recently adopted by the Town Council, specifically sections 72-2 and 72-3. Following is an excerpt from the Right to Know law. Please note the italicized sections which we believe apply directly to these small group meetings.

§ 401. Declaration of public policy; rules of construction

The Legislature finds and declares that public proceedings exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the Legislature that their actions be taken openly and that the records of their actions be open to public inspection and their deliberations be conducted openly. *It is further the intent of the Legislature that clandestine meetings, conferences or meetings held on private property without proper notice and ample opportunity for attendance by the public not be used to defeat the purposes of this subchapter.*

This subchapter shall be liberally construed and applied to promote its underlying purposes and policies as contained in the declaration of legislative intent.

(Emphasis added)

I believe that it is not your intent to violate the law or to disenfranchise the public from the budget process but the process you are using does just that. The Town Council is specifically asking that you discontinue the practice of holding these small group meetings immediately. Failure to discontinue this practice and to comply with the recently adopted ordinance regarding Finance Committee meetings will force the Town Council to take other steps to protect the integrity of the budget process here in Sanford.

In closing I would like to thank the Finance Committee for the many hours of volunteer time that you devote to the budget and also for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joseph Hanslip".

Joseph Hanslip, Chair
Town Council

CC: Town Council
Finance Committee Members