



Monday, August 15, 2005



Search/Archive

Enter Keywords

- Home
- News
- Sports
- Opinion
- Lifestyle
- Obituaries
- Special Reports
- Classifieds
- Homes North
- Help Wanted
- Legal Notices
- Archives

- Lottery-MA
- Lottery-NH
- Maps
- Movies
- Phonebook
- Stocks
- TV
- Weather

[Ads by Goooooogle](#)

Newspaper Obituaries

Search for recent obituaries in our expansive newspaper database.
Ancestry.com

North Andover Home Values

Free, quick, over-the-net home evaluation of your property

[AndoverAreaHomeInfo.cc](#)

\$300/Hr in New Hampshire?

21 Side-by-side Comparisons of Fun Jobs Paying

Archives

This article ran on 200507

Loosen the gag in Atkinson

Atkinson officials are heading down a dangerous road, throwing up a wall of silence to impede access to public information.

It's not surprising, given the well-known penchant for control of Selectman / police Chief / elderly affairs director Philip V. Consentino. And it's no coincidence that the gag order was imposed a day after this newspaper filed a right-to-know request for records from several recent selectmen's meetings.

Selectman Fred Childs said he went along with Consentino's proposal because he didn't appreciate recent newspaper stories questioning whether selectmen had violated state open meeting laws. The story in question cited one recent instance where a quorum of the board continued to talk for more than 30 minutes after the end of a public meeting, closing the door for part of the time.

The gag order, which says no one but the selectmen can release information from the selectmen's office, wasn't on the agenda for Wednesday morning's meeting but was pushed through at the end on a 2-0 vote by Consentino and Childs with no discussion. The third selectman, John Sapia, was absent. It says any information from the selectmen's office must go through one of the selectmen, which would appear to effectively bar Town Administrator Russell McAllister or anyone else in Town Hall from giving out information, such as meeting minutes that should be freely available to the public.

While the selectmen may be unhappy with recent coverage, the gag order loses sight of the simple fact the information is not theirs to withhold. As elected representatives of the people, they're doing the public's business with the public's money, not running a private company. Open meeting and open records laws were enacted to protect the public's right to know what's going on, from the lowest level of town government to the halls of Congress.

Return to Archive Search Results

This article from 200507



HOMES
NORTH

Kathy DeLorenzo
Contributing Agent

up to \$300/HOUR.
FunJobsReview.com

And punishing a newspaper — or anyone else whose questions they don't like — by withholding information is both incredibly petty and not the job of officials in any town.

Newspaper Ads
Work
Massive Coverage.
Great Rates.
Classified ads
reach millions!
www.naps.cc

While such overly restrictive information policies may meet the letter of the law, they hardly honor its spirit.

↑ [Back to top](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Company History](#) | [Submit an Ad](#) | [Submit a Story](#) | [Career Opportunities](#)

© Copyright Eagle Tribune Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Terms of Use.
100 Turnpike Street, North Andover, MA 01845 978-946-2000