

All That Happened Was Nothing: Right Wing Recall Fizzles

Earlier this month, Motif reported on a recall measure against North Kingstown school committee member Jennifer Lima. So what happened? Nothing: October 12 came and went and the committee petitioning for the recall didn't turn in any signatures at all. The rumor around town is that they only gathered about 700 signatures, fewer than a quarter of the 3100 they needed. They had ample financial backing, from the Gaspee Project and their extensive dark money network of donors. Despite the money that littered the town - all-town mailers, glossy flyers, polished website - the record was of total failure.



Jennifer Lima - relieved to not be recalled

But no matter, the bullies pivoted on a dime, and they were out in force at the School Committee meeting that very evening. Nobody mentioned the recall at all - what recall, what are you talking about? Instead, they were there to protest terrible things found in school library books. (The two that are getting the most attention are *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie and *Gender Queer: a Memoir* by Maia Kobabe.) Of course we didn't even get to that because shortly after the public comment began, the meeting was totally derailed by people refusing to wear a mask.

No police were on hand to enforce the mask mandate, so the chair adjourned the meeting and that was that. Of course that made the bullies angrier because they were going to be denied their moment to complain, so they shouted more. I thought it was good to leave the pro-covid crowd alone and didn't stick around, so I didn't see that much. But one of them posted video of the disruption on social media where an attentive high school student copied it before he thought better and deleted it. My favorite moment on the video was a guy in the back shouting "Free speech! First amendment!" over and over.

I'm not sure what he thought he meant by that.

Lesson of the whole episode: These people are nothing but bluster and their financial backers are paper tigers. They simply do not have the clout they claim. They can certainly be disruptive, and they are bullies, but they can't accomplish or change anything because they don't have the votes. They're like a four-year-old throwing a tantrum. He learns he can disrupt the family and get attention, but the attentive ones learn that their parents' plans don't actually change. They still leave him with a babysitter, but now everyone's in a bad mood.