

# Web master ousted; new site eyed

**The town website will feature town government information as well as community events.**

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**LONGMEADOW** – A new town website is under construction after the Select Board voted to eliminate the current site and remove James R. Moran from his position as volunteer webmaster after 13 years of service.

"I have dedicated more than 7,000 hours in the past 13 years to this site and I can't believe it's ending this way," Moran said.

On July 26, the Select Board voted 3 to 1 to relieve Moran of his duties, calling him an "in-subordinate volunteer."

"Although the website was run on a volunteer basis it is still a representation of the town," said Select Board Chairman Robert H. Aseltine.

"He was in a role with the town that required him to have a sense of where there were conflicts of interest and he chose to ignore that."

Moran ran the town site as well as Longmeadowbuzz.blogspot.com and Longmeadowbiz.com. Longmeadow Buzz is a blog discussing local issues open to all town residents while Longmeadow Biz is a venue for local businesses to advertise their services.

Money from advertisers was used to pay for the Comcast Internet connection for the town site as well as any software necessary to update the site. There were links to both sites on the town website, but Moran removed them at the request of the board.

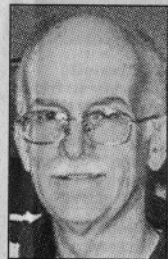
In 2009, Moran posted en-

tries on the blog in support of the Longmeadow High School renovation and reconstruction project, but closer to the June 8 election this year he changed his opinion and began posting negative views of the high school project. Moran said that is when he was first approached by the Select Board about inappropriate posting.

"When I was speaking in favor of the school project they had nothing to say about it. But when I began posting negative comments about the project I was called an insubordinate volunteer and lost my web master privileges," he said.

Aseltine said his concerns were not about whether Moran was in favor or against the school project.

"He is entitled to his opinion. The problem was that while he was running the town site he was also posting personal attacks on Select Board members and the former su-



James R. Moran

perintendent of schools. He also did not allow people with opposing views to post their comments," Aseltine said. Moran said he only censored one poster, whom he felt was disrespectful.

In a June 4 blog entry Moran posted several letters dated Nov. 3, Nov. 10 and Nov. 19 sent by the state School Building Authority to the former Superintendent of Schools E. Jahn Hart. The letters stated that the School Building Committee had not given sufficient evidence to warrant a new school.

Aseltine said the letters were part of the normal back and forth discussion between the state and the town before

they made a major decision. Ultimately, the authority unanimously approved the \$78 million project. The town also approved the project during a special Town Meeting May 25.

In the blog, Moran said School Building Committee co-chairs Robert Barkett and Christine L. Swanson and Hart were misleading when they said the letters were available to the public. Moran argues that the letters were not made public until several residents used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain them.

"I just want honest and transparent government. People deserve the right to express their opinions and to know all sides of a story," Moran said.

Moran said he believes he lost his web master privileges so that the board could control the content on the website.

"That is not the case," Aseltine said. "We just think Jim is no longer in a position to run the town site objectively. We understand that the blog and the town site are different things, but he was still volunteering for the town while attacking the integrity of Select Board members and Jahn Hart, and that is not tolerable," Aseltine said.

Moran said after 13 years of service he does not plan on giving up his work. He has created a new website [www.longmeadowma.org](http://www.longmeadowma.org) which will feature community events. He will also continue to monitor the blog.

Aseltine said the board is working with the information technology department to create a government-based site that will also include community events. They plan on establishing clear guidelines for the new web master so problems do not arise in the future.