

To My Fellow Wilmington Residents:

When I ran for re-election as one of your representatives on the Shawsheen Tech School Committee in 2019, I had decided that my term, which would be my ninth, would be my final as well. As that term draws to a close, I would like to personally thank each one of you for allowing me to serve this community as an elected school committee member, both in Wilmington and at Shawsheen Tech, for a cumulative total of 36 years.

Education has always been my passion. I was fortunate enough to be offered a teaching job in the Wilmington Public Schools upon my graduation from Salem State University in 1979. I undoubtedly would have made teaching my lifelong passion, were it not unceremoniously derailed by the implementation of Proposition 2 ½ shortly after my career as a teacher began. While I elected to leave teaching at that time, due to tremendous job uncertainty, I never lost my passion for education.

In 1982, I was elected to the Wilmington School Committee at the age of 25. I served as a school committee member in Wilmington from 1982 through 1988, and again from 1991 through 1994. My terms in Wilmington were during very tumultuous financial times, and I am grateful for having had these experiences. I am also grateful for having had the opportunity to serve on the Wilmington School Committee with a tremendously diverse group of people. Some were educators, some had financial backgrounds, and some were parents with a passion for education. What we all had in common was the same goal. To make the Wilmington Public Schools the best that they could possibly be.

Shortly after leaving the Wilmington School Committee in 1994, I received a phone call from Charles Lyons, the Superintendent at Shawsheen Tech, asking me if I would be interested in filling a vacancy on his school committee caused by the untimely death of my good friend John Gillis while in office. I informed Mr. Lyons that I knew nothing about vocational education, had three children under six at home, and had just completed nine years on the Wilmington School Committee. I was not sure that I wanted to continue in any elective office. I told him that I would, however, agree to serve out the remainder of Mr. Gillis' term were the Wilmington Board of Selectman and the Wilmington School Committee inclined to vote for me to do so. I was fortunate enough to be so nominated to complete Mr. Gillis' term, and thus began my 28-year tenure as a school committee member at Shawsheen Tech.

Upon my arrival at Shawsheen Tech, I discovered the world of vocational education, a field totally foreign to me. I was intrigued by the integration of vocational skills and academic classes, and I immediately became impressed with the dedication of the school staff, both vocationally and academically, in the success of their students. Thus, I decided to stay on as a school committee member.

I also discovered at Shawsheen Tech a superintendent, Charles Lyons, whose passion for vocational education and academic excellence were second to none. What was most impressive about Charlie Lyons, however, was his knowledge of municipal finance. Charlie's expertise on these matters is legendary, and his painstaking preparation of his annual budget insured every student at Shawsheen Tech was being provided with an education that top notch and would prepare them for future success, wherever life would take them. When Charlie Lyons retired in 2015, after 28 years at Shawsheen Tech, a void was created that will be very difficult to fill. I learned so much from Charlie Lyons in our time together at Shawsheen, and I am proud to call him my mentor and my friend.

I would like to take this time to thank the following people, whose dedication and support for my passion for education made it possible for me to serve in an elected capacity for the last 36 years:

My wife Carla, who spent countless nights at home early in my career with three children under six. Without her support and encouragement, my participation in this process would not have been possible. I am truly blessed to have her by my side.


My four children, Rob, Catherine, Mary and David, who have also selflessly allowed me to serve as an elected official. Over the years, I have missed countless school events, sporting events, dance recitals and quality time at home due to school committee meetings. I thank all of you for allowing me to pursue my passion for education.

Jim Gillis, with whom I served for 26 years as a member of the Shawsheen Tech School Committee. Jim was a passionate advocate for vocational education, and academic excellence, and the Town of Wilmington was lucky to have him as an elected representative at Shawsheen Tech for 27 years. Although our association at Shawsheen has ended, Jim and I will remain true friends and winter travel companions.

In closing, I would like to offer my best wishes to Charles Fiore, my current colleague at Shawsheen., and to whomever may be elected to succeed me in April. May you both continue to uphold the highest of educational standards established at Shawsheen Tech over the years by your predecessors.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve all of you for the past 36 years, and I look forward to seeing you around town.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RGP', followed by a long horizontal line and a small flourish.

Robert G. Peterson, Sr.