

TOWN BOARD CURTAILS COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

By Susan Siegel

Is this what you expected from our new Town Board?

It didn't take long for the new supermajority on our Town Board to try to silence criticism. Tuesday night, at the new Board's very first meeting, Supervisor Grace, joined by Councilmen Bernard, Diana and Lachterman, moved Yorktown's time honored Courtesy of the Floor tradition from the beginning to the very end of the meeting agenda.

Councilman Patel was the only Board member who objected to the change.

So now, if you want to address the Board, you'll have to wait until 8:30pm, 9:30pm, 10:30pm, or even later. You'll never know when Courtesy of the Floor will start. You'll just have to sit and wait. And wait. And wait. Or, as the four Board members obviously hope, you won't bother to show up at all.

All four Board members insisted that they weren't trying to stifle your right to address your elected officials. But, they insisted, the Board has to get on with the town's business. As though hearing from their constituents isn't the town's business.

Councilman Bernard went so far as to call Courtesy of the Floor a "circus."

For the new supermajority on the Board, the town business that comes first is hearing from the lawyers and other professionals representing developers. As Supervisor Grace openly explained, these folks are being paid up to \$400 an hour and they shouldn't have to wait while town residents address the Board.

If you want to communicate with your elected officials, there are other ways besides Courtesy the four Board members suggested: you could email or phone them or visit the supervisor's office. They just don't want you to make your comments before the camera so your fellow residents can hear what you have to say. They don't want awkward questions. They don't want criticism.

YOU HAVE A CHOICE. You can sit back, do nothing and be silenced. Or, you can speak up and protest this new change. It's up to you.

- Tell Supervisor Grace and Councilmen Bernard, Diana and Lachterman you want Courtesy restored to the beginning of the meeting. And while you're at it, ask them to restore the second Courtesy at the end of the agenda in the event a resident has a question or comment on something that was said during the meeting.
- Tell them to restore – and keep to – the three minute time limit so that Courtesy needn't take up so much of the Board's "precious" time.
- And politely suggest to Supervisor Grace that Courtesy would be more manageable if he stopped interrupting the speakers and shortened his responses.

And mark your calendar now for January 19th – the next regular Town Board meeting. Plan to stay to the end of the meeting and when Supervisor Grace opens up Courtesy, share your displeasure with his new system.

Town Board email address

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