

Remove Bruno as RTM moderator

Blunders infringe on schools, usurp authority, embarrass Branford's legislative body.

James Bruno — the moderator of Branford's legislative body, the Representative Town Meeting — is unfit for the post.

He has blundered repeatedly this year. In February, he read a letter at an RTM meeting that contained unproven allegations against a teacher identified in the letter. The RTM has no operational control of the schools. Instead, the letter should have been forwarded to the schools for investigation.

Both Frank Carrano, the chairman of the Board of Education, and Kathleen Halligan, the school superintendent, have protested Bruno's violation of a teacher's privacy and his improper involvement in a matter that belongs with the schools. In a letter to Bruno, Halligan has threatened legal action if Bruno again violates the confidentiality of a school personnel matter.

The schools' protest comes only a month after Bruno mishandled another letter. At a January meeting of the RTM, Bruno read a letter from two former chairmen of the Democratic Town Committee that accused four members of unethical conduct for alleged election violations. Although the RTM took no action on the letter, Bruno forwarded it to the state Elections Enforcement Commission, along with a cover letter implying the RTM endorsed the complaint.

The charter gives the RTM authority over the election and qualifications of its members. Bruno assumed, incorrectly, he had the power to remove RTM members on his own.

Bruno's actions may be wrapped up in the maneuvering within various factions of the local Democratic Party that has splintered over unhappiness with the conduct of Cheryl Morris, the Democratic first selectman. Morris' opponents have charged that both of the letters Bruno read were aimed at critics of Morris.

Politics aside, the RTM needs a moderator who understands the limits of the post. Bruno isn't up to the task. He should be replaced.