

Editors:

The following article (in black text) was published today, March 1, on the political blog, Electablog.com, which has published many articles critical of the efforts to create a classical charter school in Brighton.

We, the Livingston Classical Academy, offer this rebuttal. Our comments are in red.

UPDATED: Leader of Brighton group has concerned parent arrested at an “open house” for their proposed tea party charter school

BY ELECTABLOG ON MARCH 1, 2015 IN [EDUCATION](#), [TEA PARTY](#)



Over the past few months, [I have written about](#)

Indeed you have written about much related to the efforts to create a classical charter school in Brighton. And not once have you or anyone tried to discuss your concerns with either Mr. Pat Battaglia or the core group that is working on this effort.

the efforts of a group formerly known as the American Christian Academies

Our group in Brighton has never been known as American Christian Academies

to form a tea party charter school

what is a “tea party” charter school? Certainly not what we are attempting.

in Brighton, Michigan that would use tax dollars to run as a public school. The name of the group was later changed to American Classical Academies

the Brighton effort has never been known as American Classical Academy. Until two weeks ago it was called Lindbom Classical Academy (LCA). The name been changed to Livingston Classical Academy (LCA) at the request of the Lindbom family about two weeks ago.

and its leader Pasquale Battaglia has been leading the charge to get Brighton Public Schools to charter their conservative ideology-driven school.

“ideology” is a loaded word and we are anything but ideologues. We favor the classical model of education, which was at the foundation of all American public schools from the get-go, when Thomas Jefferson first proposed universal education for all Americans.

One of the main opponents of this effort is Glenn Ikens, a Brighton parent who lives near the proposed Lindbom Classical Academy. He has been vocal at school board meetings, in op-eds for the *Livingston County Press & Argus*, and on social media.

Mr. Ikens is also a teacher in the Dearborn public schools, and a member of the teacher’s union there, the Michigan Federation of Teachers

As we stated earlier, while he has been a vocal opponent of LCA, he has never made any effort to talk to or correspond with Mr. Battaglia, nor anyone in the core group of LCA.

Some of what he has written falls in the category of hate speech against Christians.

Over the weekend, Ikens attended an “open house” at the former Lindbom Elementary school.

He did not attend as he was escorted out of the LCA building before it began. He was asked to leave as soon as he came to the registration table. He was not invited and there was never an open invitation for the general public to attend.

However, once he was recognized, Pasquale Battaglia demanded that he leave. When Ikens refused, Battaglia called the police and had him arrested for trespassing at the open house.

The following is Ikens’ account of what happened to him and what Battaglia’s actions tell us about the group he runs.

Today, Saturday, February 28, I attempted to attend an Open House at the proposed Lindbom Classical Academy. The event, scheduled from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, was billed as an open house to show “community support to our potential authorizers.” The “Come one, come all!” salutation was certainly welcoming. I figured everyone included me, a life-long Brighton resident who lives in the neighborhood.

The invitation was never broadcast to anyone not on the LCA list of known supporters. If Mr. Ikens received this note by email, it was by deception or error. He did not RSVP. We never invited him or anyone else to our open house who has not expressed an interest in the success of LCA. And he knows this.

The American Classical Academy people had also indicated on several occasions, in print and at board meetings, that they would like to sit down and have a friendly talk with those who may disagree with them.

This is quite true, and at no point in the last year has Mr. Ikens ever indicated that he is the least bit interested in either sitting down with anyone associated with LCA or having a “friendly talk.”

I thought about refraining from attending, as I did the last time they had an open house,

About 100 homeowners in the neighborhood of the LCA school were invited to attend an open house on Feb 7 to meet our Development Team, Mr. Battaglia and to learn more about LCA and classical education. The invitations were hand-delivered to homes near the school.

Mr. Ikens’s wife, Sue Ellen, attended that open house and had a long and pleasant conversation with Mr. Battaglia in the principal’s office. At no time was there any hostility expressed to Mrs. Ikens and she was quite friendly to us.

because I wanted to respect their space and didn’t want to stir up trouble for them in their house.

That Mr. Ikens will reference the idea of his desire to “stir up trouble for them in their house” tells us, something about his motivation in attending on Saturday, without an RSVP.

Yet I was eager for the opportunity to hear the comments of their promised special guest Phil Kilgore, Head of the Barney Charter School Program at Hillsdale College, creators of the “classical” curriculum the American Classical Academy at Lindbom intends to employ.

Again, the American Classical Academy is not affiliated with LCA.

At the last minute, with the school building only a block and a half from my house, I decided to walk over to the meeting.

I arrived a few minutes before 1:00 pm. Immediately upon entering I was recognized by a vocal supporter of the the ACA, a woman who recognized me from occasions when I had spoken against the Brighton Schools’ chartering the ACA at Lindbom many times

over the course of the past year at Brighton Area Schools School Board meetings. She was obviously agitated,

Not “obviously agitated”

insisting that I wasn’t supposed to be there and that I must leave at once.

He was calmly told the event was “invitation only.” Mr. Ikens replied he was not leaving and said, “you will have to kick me out.”

Without breaking stride, I calmly informed her that I intended to stay for the presentation, as I am a Michigan taxpayer with legitimate interest in the affairs of a school that proposes to become a public school using my tax dollars in my neighborhood.

At the registration desk, I was told that I was not on the list of approved guests.

Based on Mr. Ikens’s published hatred of Mr. Battaglia and his seething contempt for the efforts of the core team of LCA, we did not want him to be in the meeting, as we fully expected him to “stir up trouble” which is what his wife did do at the meeting. To restate it again: This event was not publicized to anyone except to lists of known supporters or likely supporters.

I attempted to sign at the bottom of an attendance roster. It was hastily pulled away from me. I attempted again on another roster. That too was pulled away, and I was told I was not welcome and I must leave. I reiterated that I was there to attend the meeting, continuing down the hall to the meeting room. Once there, I drew myself a cup of coffee and sat down quietly in the front row to wait for the presentation.

Within minutes, Mr. Pasquale Battaglia (landlord of the Lindbom property and founder of the American Classical Academy) entered, accompanied by several men. I remained seated. Mr. Battaglia introduced himself. I introduced myself. (Mere formalities. While our first face-to-face meeting, we both recognized each other after a year of public disagreement regarding his attempt to have the Brighton Area Schools charter his academy.) We shook hands. His cordiality ended there as Mr. Battaglia promptly asked me to leave. I calmly responded that as a citizen of Michigan and of Brighton and as a

taxpayer, I intended to stay in order to hear the plan for a proposed “public school” to be opened in my neighborhood.

There was more to that conversation, which we considered proof-positive that Mr. Ikens had every intention of “stirring up trouble in our own house.”

He accused me of proving myself an “unreasonable man,” presumably because I have disagreed publicly with his views and his so called educational mission.

Mr. Ikens has done more than merely “disagree publicly” with Mr. Battaglia. In at least one of his many angry articles he published a photograph of Mr. Battaglia’s wife, and even though he certainly knows better, he has accused LCA of intending to be a religious school.

He said he preferred I leave. I said I preferred to stay. He informed me the building was private property, much like “his own home,” and that I must leave. I again refused, insisting I should be allowed to stay as his organization is still seeking a public charter. He then turned to one of his ACA men and directed him to contact the police.

I remained sitting quietly. In short order the police arrived. They asked me if I understood Mr. Battaglia was the “owner” of Lindbom Elementary. I said I certainly understood that. They asked me to leave again. I refused, again based on my authority as a taxpaying citizen who is interested in “public” schools. They informed me I must leave or be arrested. I refused. I was then, upon Mr. Battaglia’s insistence,

Mr. Ikens is an experienced public provocateur whose exploits to destroy Mr. Battaglia and everything associated with him demonstrates. Anyone who was genuinely interested in learning more about LCA and the efforts of the core team would have responded to the multiple requests to meet with us privately.

In his meeting with Mrs. Ikens on Feb 6, Mr. Battaglia expressed his desire to likewise meet with her husband.

By his angry demeanor expressed to everyone in the LCA building, it was apparent that Mr. Ikens was not interested in civil discourse, but – we believed – would likely disrupt the meeting in some way.

In the complaint to the Brighton Police Department (signed at 1:15 p.m. when the open house had already formally begun) Mr. Battaglia indicated that the primary reason he was asked to leave was because “I feared for my safety and that of our guests.”

Mr. Ikens’s wife proved our fears were correct only an hour and a half later.

arrested, cuffed, escorted to the police vehicle, taken to the county jail, placed in a holding cell, charged with misdemeanor trespassing, booked, and finally, released on \$500 bond.

Mr. Ikens could have easily just walked out of the building peacefully. We believe he wanted to be arrested and wanted to go to jail to get himself publicity for his campaign against charter schools.

This is classic union thuggery. And he is playing from the radical’s rulebook.

I find it intriguing that the American Classical Academy had me removed from their private premises

Again, he was removed by the Brighton police at the request of the owner of the building. so they could have a private open house regarding a school they intend to make a public charter school, answerable to the public and taxpayers of our state. This attempt to thread the needle between the public and the private, the community and the corporation, is at the heart of the problem with the charter school movement in Michigan.

No, Mr. Ikens, you are quite wrong about what “is the heart of the problem” and you have made no effort, -- NONE – in the last year and a half to sit down with anyone on the core team to even learn what is proposed.

For-profit charters

LCA is not intended to be a “for profit charter”

want to be private when it serves their private operational and financial interests, then public when it suits their profit interest.

Those who assert that charters are subject to the same standards as public schools

Nobody at LCA has ever said “charters are subject to the same standards,” which is why we are seeking to create a classical academy. While there are many standards that apply to all charters (as public schools) there are some that do not apply.

should reflect upon my arrest for merely exercising my rights as a citizen to know exactly for what purposes my tax dollars are to be used.

There is no secrecy here with what we are doing.

As he is well aware, we have asked to discuss with Mr. Ikens and anyone else our plans. He can sit down with us at any time to talk and see our plans. We refused to allow him into our meeting with 200 people – including many dozens of children – because we feared he would, to use his words again, “stir up trouble for them in their house.”

This is the veil of opacity that charter schools in this state are being afforded by the current wild-west, entrepreneurial charter system. It can only result in misuse and abuse.

Yikes! Where do these words come from? “Wild west”? In a free society people should be able to make choices about such things as where their child will be educated, and what they will be taught. There is nothing “wild” about educational opportunity, or choices in education.

It is particularly interesting to me that the American Classical Academy and its supporters– in an effort to distance themselves from Mr. Battaglia’s publicly proclaimed incendiary views

If one is looking for “incendiary views,” Mr. Ikens and his wife are the first place to look. The video of Mrs. Ikens shows her effort to “stir up trouble” at the open house that her husband was unable to create.

on race, guns, gender, religion and government as well perhaps as his overtly stated political aims for ACA—continue to characterize Mr. Battaglia as a mere landlord with no influence over curriculum or operations. If merely a landlord, he is a curiously powerful landlord, indeed. He appears to control the guest list in what he terms his

“home.” His influence would seem to exceed that of landlord, when he directs the events, heads the promotion, and commands the his people to take police action.

Again, the building is a private place right now and is not part of the public school system. Once we get our charter, Mr. Ikens and his wife will be able to attend all sorts of meetings where they can stir up as much trouble as they wish.

The open house was scheduled for only two hours, and was intended as an opportunity for parents to see what the school looked like, meet Development Team members, hear the guest speaker from Hillsdale and to ask questions.

I too am a landlord. I rent a small home to tenants in Brighton. However, I have never claimed the power over the guests my tenants may invite to the home they rent from me. Indeed, I do not have the power to do so. It is quite an irony that my renters have more rights in regard the property they rent from me than the Lindbom Classical Academy appears to have in relation to the property they rent from Mr. Battaglia.

Mr. Richard Streetman, the man who has claimed repeatedly that he is the head of the Lindbom Classical Academy and asserted repeatedly that Mr. Battaglia is only the landlord was present at the event. In fact, I passed him while being escorted from the building in police custody. One has to wonder why, if indeed, Mr. Streetman and his team are in charge did they not lead in determining whether or not I was to stay.

The decision not to allow Mr. Ikens to attend was because we correctly feared he intended to “stir up trouble” and we had scores of impressionable children present. The whole Development Team was of the mind that those attending were entitled to attend a peaceful event centered on a civilized presentation of what LCA will become, not a verbal fight over union ideology by a unionist who has more than demonstrated a visceral hatred for the school and Mr. Battaglia in particular.

Clearly, Mr. Battaglia controls this group, from founding to promotions to philosophy to the purse strings, he is the major mover.

No true. Plans for a charter school were well underway more than a year before the members of the Development Team ever heard of Mr. Battaglia. This is not a secret and Mr. Ikens has been told this repeatedly.

You might also find it interesting that John Conely, our Tea Party Brighton Board of Education member, was in attendance at the open house. Also Nick Fiani was in attendance and apparently addressed the group. Conflict of interest?

Nope, no conflict of interest at all. None at all.

Another point I find most intriguing is the continued association between Battaglia's ACA and Hillsdale College. It seems to me that Hillsdale's incursion into public education is one of the most disconcerting developments in the charter school experiment across the country. Hillsdale partnerships with Battaglia and the Tea Party are really worth investigating. They need to be exposed for the religio-political agenda they are trying to push in the public schools.

Nobody associated with LCA nor Hillsdale College has anything to hide, and we invite Mr. Ikens and anyone else who is interested to learn more about what we are doing to contact us.

The Barney Charter School Initiative web site has scores of videos of presentations that have been made at conferences over the years. Again, there is no secrecy.

This is a link to the Barney Initiative web site:

<http://www.hillsdale.edu/outreach/charterschools/seminars>

If anyone wants to see a "religio-political" agenda trying to be pushed in the public schools, they need merely to read the Electablog web site, where this article was first published, or listen to some of the teacher's union members who spoke against LCA at the Jan 26 Brighton Area Schools board meeting.

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