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[CE SBAC] Cape Elizabeth School Building Project

1 message

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Sun, Jun 18, 2023 at 11:59 AM

To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

Dear Committee Members,

I was pleased to read about the progress the Committee is making on preparing a new proposal for the Cape School building project. Frequent and concrete updates will greatly increase the confidence of our Town residents in the final proposals. I am, however, puzzled by the rationale of having a "town-wide" survey that you have scheduled for this summer.

It is not clear to me what actionable data you will be able to collect given the general lack of specific knowledge related to this project. The answer to the question of why people voted against the proposal is simply that "it was too expensive". At a much lower cost the proposal would likely have passed with few or no questions asked as I believe the need to update/replace our school buildings is widely understood and supported. I do not think that most people can be more specific and provide detailed reasoning supported by concrete data about the project. If you were to ask town residents what they consider to be a "tolerable" cost (increase to the tax rate), you might end up with an unattainable goal as these answers will not reflect any specific functional requirements or the reality of construction costs. As I see it, the survey would only allow you to segment voter blocks to develop target messaging rather than collecting information to design a new school.

I think that the current focus should be on creating a budget goal. This needs to be based on a solid enrollment forecast. I have read the prior presentations, but without a transparent model and documented assumptions used to develop a forecast, it would be hard to get buy-in from the general public, with some people seeing enrollment declining because of past trends, and some seeing it increase due to the general influx into Southern Maine and increased density of housing. The enrollment information combined with a typical square foot/student cost plus the cost of construction would yield a reasonable budget boundary and allow for a more meaningful discussion as to how the school building project might affect taxes.

Of course, establishing this target is just the beginning as all functional requirements and alternative scenarios would need to be developed and tested against the target cost.

Have you considered this approach? If not, perhaps it is something you might want to discuss internally. I would be happy to join you to illustrate how this process could work, and how it would allow you to develop a proposal that would garner general support and provide a meaningful framework for substantive input and discussion.

As for the survey, I ask you to please make sure that it is more than just an activity to demonstrate "getting input from

every voter.” Perhaps you could consider mini-surveys that follow key communications/decisions points to ensure continuing buy-in to the project trajectory.

If you would like to discuss any of the points I made in this note, please let me know. Also, I would be glad to help you with your work in a substantial way.

Sincerely,

Piotrek Stamieszkin

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