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## [CE SBAC] Thought on SBAC Finance/Communications

1 message

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**Kevin Justh** <kevinjusth@gmail.com>  
To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

Thu, Nov 9, 2023 at 9:29 AM

Dear SBAC Members:

I have listened with great interest to several of your recent meetings, and offer some suggestions for your consideration:

1. As you've right pointed out many times, the town rejected a bond proposal for a specific project at a specific budget. This budget came with a potential range of tax impacts, although it's unclear that voters knew exactly what those were. To that end, starting the financial piece early is a great idea and I'm pleased to see you doing that.
2. As Michael and Caitlin pointed out in your last meeting, there is another element that is critical to this, and that is time. I would suggest considering this as "time to the next bond", or time to the next major project. This was not well understood in the last referendum, but I think it's a good idea to add it to this list. I would submit the time component from the last project was roughly 15-20 years - the project proposed would have served the 2 new schools for 30-40 years, and pushed back major renovations to the high school for a medium to long term.
3. There are 3 interconnected but very different pieces to whatever project you propose - budget, tax impact, and time. You'll know the budget. You'll never have an exact tax impact, just a range. And for time, you'll need to consider that in conjunction with the first 2. Just as budget and tax impact are NOT the same thing, I'd encourage you to think of project and plan as different things. You're developing a project AND a plan - the project is what goes to referendum next year, the plan is the coordination of what will eventually be multiple projects over time.
4. The reason time and plan are important is that whatever discrete project may happen is almost certainly not going to fully solve the needs our schools have. The project the voters rejected didn't solve every need our facilities have - just look at the need to move the election this week because of yet another facility failure. An example of this in real world examples is, the facility needs portion may recommend replacement or major renovation of all three schools. That's not a project you're going to propose. The project you may propose could be the replacement of one school immediately, with minor renovations to another and mid-level renovations to the third, so that there is a plan of gradual replacement or major renovation in 7-15 years to meet remaining needs.
5. This plan approach to meeting needs allows for taxpayers to balance the expected timeframes. Personally, I plan to live here through 3-4 major school bond issuances. Some voters will live here longer; some perhaps have shorter time horizons. But understanding the timing component backs into the tax impact, and that then informs the project you propose today, which of course becomes your budget.

I know how easy it is to get hung up on each specific point - your last meeting was close to 60 minutes before the time component came up. And, at the end of all this, your goal is consensus - we know there is a large vocal component that is simply not going to vote for any solution to our schools' problems. One of the reasons your service is so admirable is that you are almost certainly going to create a plan that close to half of the town doesn't support.

But, it is paramount that you listen to the experts you've hired, retain the best outside expertise to help with the finance portion, and then clearly explain how all of the components (budget, taxes, time) impact the community. Your survey showed a lot of things, not just a number. It showed people need to and want to understand the details, the facts, and yes how it impacts them today, tomorrow, and until the next major project. The voters rejected \$116 million. They rejected 16-22% tax increase (perhaps less) to get to the next bond 15-20 years from now. And they rejected the idea that they did not need professional guidance and communication about where the town finances are, where they have been, and where they are going.

Thank you for all of your hard work.

Kevin Justh  
9 Spruce Lane

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