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[CE SBAC] Fwd: SBAC Finance Subcommittee Tomorrow + Town Council

1 message

Eliza Matheson <eliza.matheson@gmail.com>

Wed, Feb 7, 2024 at 5:57 PM

To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

Please see email below; I have corrected the email and forwarded to the correct address.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Eliza Matheson** <eliza.matheson@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Feb 7, 2024 at 5:55 PM

Subject: SBAC Finance Subcommittee Tomorrow + Town Council

To: <cecesb@capeelizabethschools.org>, <cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org>, CE School Board <cesb@capeelizabethschools.org>

To the SBAC Finance Subcommittee, SBAC, CE Town Council, and CESB:

I was hoping to attend the SBAC Finance SubComm in person tomorrow, but I will be working until later in the evening. While I'm sure there will be many folks able to attend in person, please remember there are **many** of us in the community who would like to be there and cannot due to timing with childcare, jobs, or other commitments. Please weigh our feedback with equal weight.

It seems to me that going into a project of this magnitude (the school project), that impacts every single citizen of this community (property values being directly related to schools), many outside the community (teachers/staff), and **many who cannot vote but will impact them the most** (the student enrollment save for the 18+ seniors at CEHS), we should NOT be approaching it the way we approach buying a car. Or the way we have approached these projects for the entirety of my life in Cape Elizabeth (40 years).

For far too long, we have delayed, delayed, and delayed. We have hired so many consultants and experts who almost UNIVERSALLY tell us the same thing - renovation is 1) costly short term AND long term and 2) unpredictable in final costs and processes. We do not know what we will see when we open up for renovations, we are limited in how we can use the space, and we. To put a relatively arbitrary price tag on this project up front ("Let's say \$70million and see what we can get and shop around) is incredibly short sighted.

What we should have been doing for the last 30 years since the last full renovation in the ES/MS is saving/planning for this inevitability. It blows my mind that we, as a town, have functioned in this way. It is misguided at best and at worst, undercutting the very fabric of community planning and development.

When talking about municipalities, zero debt should **not** be the goal. Zero and extremely low debt, which has seemed to be the governing philosophy of the town council for the past two decades, leads to a build up of crumbling infrastructure across the board. A disguise of savings in the form of low taxes, we are now reaching the threshold where the people who came before us have set us up for failure.

I wish I could convey how let down I feel by the lack of long term planning in the town's financial planning. I grew up here from birth to now - 40 in October. I came home to raise my kids here under the pretense that there was good fiscal management that set us up for long term success. But it appears that we have 100% fixated on low taxes and no investment. And this isn't just for schools - we've got major issues to fix in the coming decades. Where was the forethought?

Now is the time. Let's not approach this the same way we have approached fiscal planning for the last 30 years.

Thank you for your time and energy serving the town.

Eliza Matheson
270 Fowler Road

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