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[CE SBAC] Public trust

1 message

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To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

Hello-

I hope everyone had a chance to take a real break from your volunteer work with the SBAC. I wanted to offer a perspective as a community member regarding perception of the committee's work and thoughts about credibility and trust from the public.

Your words and actions matter to the community and with them you can build trust or take it away from the SBAC's work. At many recent meetings I have heard committee members proffer opinions or ask questions with a preface of the following: "people are asking me..." or "people are telling me..." or "I'm getting a text message asking me..." or "someone texted me and thinks that...". At the same time, the SBAC collected hundreds of comments regarding the 7 design options and has taken lots of public comment and received many separate emails about the design choices. The over 200+ responses we barely mentioned, let alone discussed, at the meeting where the SBAC decided on the options that would move forward. In fact, public comment was allowed only after the vote was made.

The SBAC committee members are charged with "public input and public outreach" not charged to represent the special interests of personal friends. When committee members only discuss "things they are hearing" which, seems to me, is code for "the friends I speak with socially" or give air time to private text messages and entirely fail to mention or discuss hundreds of comments favoring options that aren't selected, it tears down public trust in the work of the committee. It says to the public, "if you have the private cell phone number of a committee member your opinions and questions are more valuable" and at the same time it appears the committee is not interested in considering publically solicited comments and feedback. The public comments about the 7 design option are also automatically made public for transparency purposes, but private text messages or emails to SBAC members about the project must be requested. It lacks transparency and erodes public trust.

The town, and our children and teachers need better facilities. They need a project that meets their needs and a project the community feels good about supporting. The committee needs public trust and credibility so the school board can build support around whatever solution advances to voters. Please be mindful that the charge of member is to "seek public input" and not to "represent special interests". The committee members should carefully consider whether their actions build public trust in the process or diminish it.

Respectfully,
Elizabeth

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