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## [CE SBAC] How will we remember the SBAC?

1 message

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**Scott Mazuzan** <mazuzan@outlook.com>

Fri, May 10, 2024 at 3:23 PM

To: "cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org" &lt;cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org&gt;

Hello SBAC,

All day, I've been asking myself: "How will the SBAC be remembered?" There were certainly some things which happened last night that upset me. While it is tempting to sink into a quagmire of name-calling, I am compelled to reach out to you to ask you to consider the gravity of last night's 5-4 vote. I implore you to reflect on the consequences of advancing Option B to the School Board, and I implore you to reconsider your decision. (I don't even know if that is possible, but I can't sit silent.)

In order to become a reality, your recommendation must enjoy the support of 1) the School Board 2) The Town Council and 3) a majority of Cape Elizabeth Voters. I call these the "three prongs of approval." If this project goes nowhere, everyone loses: our voters, our students, our educators, and the SBAC. Based on the information available to the public, it seems clear that Option B will likely enjoy the support of the current Town Council. Congratulations on that point.

It is not clear to me, however, whether the School Board will support this option. In fact, evidence seems to suggest that they won't. Of the two SB members on your committee, neither supported option B. In fact, both opposed it vocally. While "cost effective" was one of the committee's mandates, so were "comprehensive community outreach," and "the needs of students, educators, families, and the community." Option B falls demonstrably short in meeting the needs of our educators while carrying a tremendous price tag and a high level of student disruption. While you may disagree, the School Board gets the final say as to whether the plan meets the educational needs of our community. Failure to meet that standard does not represent a failure of the School Board - it is your charge to meet.

If (big if) the concept advances past the SB and Town Council, it must then face the voters. On this front, I must ask again: where are the supporters of B? We heard from a half a dozen in the last week - tops - and they seem to devote more attention to 2022's referendum and absolute tax percentage comparisons than to the relative benefits of option B. This isn't a base of support - it is a base of opposition. Negative talking points won't option B in a binary referendum vote. Supporters will need to *sell* B on its merits from an educational perspective, defend the intrinsic years of student disruption, and face a barrage of opposition from the groundswell of grassroots voters who have been most engaged in this process. These supposed supporters couldn't even show up to town hall to fight for B's survival last night; how do you expect them to advocate for this referendum? Failure to meet the needs of the community does not represent a failure of the community - that is your charge to meet.

Perhaps it is your wish that the SB rejects the recommendation, thereby making them the "bad guys" and keeping TC and SBAC's hands clean. The citizens of this town are not naive enough to buy into this narrative. Furthermore, and most importantly, this would represent a loss for everyone. Your charge was not simply to pass a recommendation along to the School Board; voters understand that you were tasked with making a recommendation that satisfies all three prongs of approval. And if they don't understand that now, you can be sure they'll understand it in November. Your committee owns Option B as a concept - win, lose, or draw. By advancing a design concept that fails to satisfy the needs of our educators and

community, you fail to meet your mandate. While you may personally believe that Option B meets these needs, this belief alone is not enough. All signs point to *very* low odds that B survives the dual gauntlet of the School Board and Voter Referendum. That will be the legacy of the SBAC. Surely you see this, too.

Once again - I implore you to consider the consequences of this decision. The SBAC will soon be dissolved, and for many of you, this will represent the end of your time at the microphone. What will the SBAC be remembered for? On your current path, you run the risk of being "the committee that advanced a completely untenable concept with very little chance of success." Last night, you were within a hair's breadth of compromise - both from a budget cap perspective and % tax increase perspective. I was so hopeful that you were about to find a solution that would enjoy the support of SBAC, the SB, and the energized base of supporters who will do everything in their power to pass E. Instead, you are about to advance a plan that has almost no chance of leaving the launch pad. You cannot lay this at the feet of the school board or of the voters; they will not stand for it.

Please, please, please: set aside special interests, set aside hurt feelings, set aside the rancor of the last few weeks, and find a way to build a new middle school. **I am now appealing to each of you personally:** Do you want the last 18 months' work to end in a fizzle? Do you want to spend the rest of the year defending your interpretation of survey results? Do you want to spend the rest of the year debating whether the SBAC failed their mandate? Do you want the work of SBAC to be reduced to a campaign talking point?

The alternative path is still possible - there are so many of us who are standing ready with our sleeves rolled up. I have every confidence that our community can pass a bond to fund E - your communications have been so effective in demonstrating how *close* within reach E is for the average taxpayer. It is not too late to compromise, create an historic coalition, and make a meaningful investment in our town. We are so, so close.

Thank you,

Scott  
he/him  
207-318-6425

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Under Maine's Freedom of Access law, documents - including e-mail - about town/school department business are classified as public records and may be subject to disclosure.

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