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[CE SBAC] Option E - Our legacy to Cape Elizabeth

1 message

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To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

Tue, May 7, 2024 at 11:56 AM

Good Morning SBAC Members,

I realize you may be reading through a number of emails over the coming days leading up to your meeting where you will make your recommendation as a committee to the town but I did want to take a moment to reach out, too. I've been following the SBAC meetings closely via CETV and in person when my family and work commitments allow. I know how hard many of you have been working at listening to the experts and the constituents alike as well as with communications. Thank you all for all of your hard work.

I write in full support of Option E (I was also in full support of Option G and remain disappointed that this is off the table) because **it gets us the most bang for our collective taxpayer buck without causing the literal years of disruption to learning** that any sort of renovation option would entail. Option E is already a major compromise--down from two new schools to one--so don't let anyone tell you that this is the same thing that was on the last ballot that was rejected.

To be clear: I am a parent so I have seen firsthand how the physical plant of the schools has negatively impacted my children from flooding bathrooms to mice to poor air quality to insufficient space to not being able to actually see them perform on stage in the "Cafetorium" because the room is not set up for viewing a stage, etc.. My children are now old enough that they do not personally stand to benefit from a new middle school (although one of them likely would have significant disruption at the end of her middle school experience with a renovation option) and, even though it will mean a slightly larger tax increase, I am still firmly in favor of building new. I understand that there may be some on the committee leaning toward what may seem like the "cheapest" option (Option B) but, long-term, I thoroughly believe that Options B and C are completely fiscally irresponsible and will be horribly disruptive of education. Moreover, these renovation only options do very little to ameliorate many of the issues that our schools are facing--from basic health and safety concerns, to snakelike designs that lead to inefficiencies in both the use of everyone's time and environmental resources, to lack of ability to integrate 21st century teaching methodologies, etc.

I heard one speaker make an analogy to car makes and models at the last meeting saying that we could go for the Bentley, etc. However, no one is asking for a "Bentley" of a school with Option E. We are just asking for a reliable, easy to maintain, environmentally-friendly school that doesn't burn through tens of thousands of gallons of fossil fuels. I think the better car analogy is this: Would you rather put a new motor, new transmission, new roof, new heating system, etc into a car that has a rusted out frame and no air conditioning and will only sputter down the road for another 10,000 miles if you're lucky or literally pay a few dollars a month more for a reliable Toyota that will only need the bare minimum of servicing and will go for 60,000 miles before needing any sort of repair? Maybe we don't opt for the power leather seats, but having the basics of a healthy, safe, reliable environment for our children, teachers, and staff that actually meets their needs is not asking for a Bentley (or the Taj Mahal).

I also heard another speaker make reference to a much less expensive school proposition in another town in Maine, saying that the School Board in that town understood that they had to lower the cost after a failed proposition, but what that speaker failed to include that the number they were citing was only for a K-1 school and not a grade 5-8 middle school, plus major renovations to the high school and elementary school. I believe that school was actually more expensive on a per classroom basis than what is being proposed here in Cape Elizabeth, but was being hailed as a more fiscally responsible approach. This is simply what new school buildings cost in this day and age. They are not getting any cheaper as we were led to believe and, in fact, I believe Harriman stated that the cost has gone up 30% since our last referendum. We cannot "do better" by waiting or hoping that the schools come to be in such disgusting and uninhabitable condition that they qualify for very limited state funding.

This is your legacy to this Town that I know we all love: **a brand new school**, or kicking the can down the road through costly renovations to an outdated middle school, which will only need replacing at the same time as the elementary and high schools. **To be clear: I will not support Option B or C** if they end up on the ballot as I believe it would be fiscally irresponsible not in our childrens' or Town's best interests.

Let's show the rest of Maine that we can be leaders here in Cape Elizabeth and that we value our children and their education.

Sincerely,

Kate Kerkam
3 Franklin Circle

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