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[CE SBAC] SBAC - Cape Elizabeth Resident Feedback

1 message

Joe Geoghegan <Joe@tdmrk.com>

Thu, May 9, 2024 at 11:24 AM

To: "cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org" <cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org>

Good morning –

My name is Joe Geoghegan and I, along with my wife Lisa and my daughters Layla (2) and Kennedy (5 months), am a Cape Elizabeth resident, living at [15 Peppergrass Road](#) in the Cross Hill neighborhood. I was lucky enough to grow up in this wonderful town and attend Cape Elizabeth public schools through high school. After moving away for several years, my wife and I moved back in 2020, and we're hopeful that Cape Elizabeth can be our family's forever residence. We moved here for many reasons, but at the top of the list was my promise to my wife that Cape Elizabeth had a wonderful school system and a commitment to excellence in education going forward. This issue matters a LOT to our family and the families of our friends that reside in Cape Elizabeth for all the same reasons.

First off, I want to thank the School Board and the Town Council for the time and energy you have all poured into these plans. I understand there are a lot of opinions on the topic, and when so much money is involved, it's always a lightning rod, and it's impossible to completely satisfy all stakeholders. With that said, I would like to devote the rest of this email towards making the case that Cape Elizabeth should invest in the improvement of our public schools NOW.

Before discussing the basic elements such as safety, cleanliness, and building systems that are on the table, I want to talk about teachers. When I was in the public school system from 1994 – 2006, what I remember most are the world-class teachers. The talent and commitment of teachers at Cape were second to none, and I attribute much of the wonderful life experience I have enjoyed to the foundation that was established in Cape schools. In a post-COVID world where employees have more leverage than ever and are empowered to choose and shape the environments in which they work, I feel it is absolutely vital to provide a Class A facility that teachers are proud to call their workplace. We need to do this in order to compete with surrounding towns and schools in Southern Maine that have already made substantial investments into their educational infrastructure. Without great teachers, there is nothing special about our school system, and without great facilities, we cannot attract and retain the best teachers.

As a teenager, I did not put all that much thought into the condition of the buildings, but I do remember thinking the buildings were outdated, inefficient, and lacked sufficient space and systems to allow learning to advance meaningfully. I remember thinking "these buildings feel like they were built and have not been improved since the '70s." They still feel that way now, and I am amazed walking into the schools 20 years later to see how little has changed. I remember that the school was too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer, and there were never enough parking spaces. It didn't matter to me all that much as a kid, but it matters enormously as a parent. We need a school that is functional, efficient, safe, clean, and yes, architecturally pleasing.

I work in construction and real estate development, and I *know* from experience that it is fiscally *irresponsible* to consider any plans that are only a "band-aid" solution. It only exacerbates inefficiencies and it ends up costing more

down the road. Let's be the generation that solves the problem now. I am in support of Option "E" which will give us a new middle school, causing the least disruption for current students while planning for future students (including the plan to address the aging High School and create a plan to rebuild Pond Cove). It is extremely important to me to have learning, eating and gathering spaces that are safe and foster creativity and technological growth. This includes natural light, safe passage for students with disabilities and secure entryways.

Lastly, I think cooling, and frankly, a good hard look at all of the HVAC and MEP systems MUST be included in the options for all school plans. Our children should have the ability to learn without having to focus on any other discomforts, and the same goes for our teachers. As a professional, I would find it unacceptable to work in a building without proper cooling. We should give the same respect to our teachers and students.

In closing, as a lifelong member of this community, I know in my heart of hearts that the fabric of Cape Elizabeth is in large part defined by having excellent schools. That culture and reputation are at risk, and we are losing ground; losing ground in the competition to attract the best teachers and administrators, and losing ground in our effort to preserve the culture that makes Cape Elizabeth such a special place. We need to make the appropriate investments now.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Joe

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