

I've written a letter to the editor in response to comments by School Board member Jack Carty about the work of the District-wide Elementary Enrollment Committee. It is included below in its entirety.

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I have attended every meeting of the District-wide Elementary Enrollment Committee (DEEC) with the exception of the first two and have found that while I may not agree with all of their positions, I must give the committee credit for tackling a politically sensitive issue with the professionalism, dedication and attention to detail that these volunteers have exhibited. The DEEC has worked diligently to develop a wide range of options and in fairness to all of our local communities chose to weigh all of them despite a lack of legal and financial counsel. The committee identified a need for and developed a cost-center analysis of Sandwich Central School courtesy of committee member and SCS principal John Hansen.

While the initial deadline has passed, I would take exception to the statement made by School Board member Jack Carty. His response to the interim report presented by Dr. McCormack implied a lapse in responsibility on the part of the committee which is neither warranted nor deserved when he said, "The thought crossed my mind. 'The dog ate my homework and I can't meet the deadline'." It should be pointed out that the first meeting of this committee was delayed by almost four months after the May meeting in which the School Board agreed to this process and tasked the prior Superintendent with forming the committee. Four months in which a significant amount of research could have been conducted and so enabled the committee to develop and present a more informed decision about how to best manage enrollment issues.

It is with that in mind that I feel the need to express my misgivings about the committee's ability to not only identify the most promising options, but also to assign to those options both a price tag and a plan for implementation, in the time remaining before the School Board finalizes its budget. All of the currently identified options have a cost, and that cost may not necessarily be monetary. If the District-wide Elementary Enrollment Committee is to present a comprehensive proposal that balances the educational needs of our students with the financial responsibility due our communities, it needs an appropriate amount of time in which to do so.

Any solution to our current situation must involve a thorough understanding of the short- and long-term implications on the communities and students involved. While fiscal responsibility must be considered given our current economic environment, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the mission of our schools is to educate the children of our communities. We cannot allow that mission to be sacrificed for the sake of political expediency.

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