

To the Editor:

Last week Mary Ann Jacob stated I made the school board's internal process "political?" Sounds like the Karl Rove playbook, attempt to make your weakness your opponent's. On 11/19/14, at a joint Legislative Council, Board of Education, Board of Finance meeting Dr. Erardi stated there are three essential studies that must be completed to reach a conclusion about closing a school, 1) the Enrollment Projection Study; 2) the School Facilities Study; and 3) the Town Space Needs Study. *With only the Enrollment information completed, Ms. Jacob asserted, when SHS opens "that despite people's hopes and dreams" a school is closing...and Dr. Erardi should lead the effort.* (See video) Political? Ms. Jacob, the Chairperson of the LC is pronouncing to the BoE what's to happen, a conclusion before the facts.

Recently, information from three sources indicated Republican BoE members were being pressured to vote to close a school. "Political?"

Rather than "internal" I have transparently expressed we do not have the information necessary to make the school closing decision, and the emotional timing is wrong. The Town Needs Space Committee (TSNC) study is not expected for completion until October 2015, and it doesn't address Hawley or the MS which should focus on possible reuse, \$\$ costs, and \$\$ saved. We know from SHS it was cheaper to rebuild than refurbish. The same could hold true for Hawley or MS. *We can't know any fixed Capital savings until we have the TSNC study completed...one of the three studies Dr. Erardi indicated a "must." Skipping this important study that provides essential information...political, a conclusion without the facts?*

Ignoring estimated 10% property value drops for homeowners in the closed school district, the resulting reduction in the grand list and increased mill rates and higher taxes for everyone else outside the district (average \$40+ net tax increase)...political?"

I made freely available my 10 page, analytical-work with 30+ pages of supportive authoritative-peer-reviewed published studies, [http://newtownbee.com/files/FACTSANDANALYSISNOTINCLUDEDINTHEJUNE2-4.docx .pdf](http://newtownbee.com/files/FACTSANDANALYSISNOTINCLUDEDINTHEJUNE2-4.docx.pdf). The Hawley School PTA, SOS and Middle Gate PTA and Board of Burgesses invited me to speak on the report. I believe the majority of these groups consist of registered Republicans and Unaffiliates. They voted to oppose closing a school at this time. "Factual," not "internal," not "political."

Ms. Jacob concluded at the LC meeting of 4/1/15, *"if we are going to close a school we really need to see a significant savings."* (See video) Agreed, yet we see no significant savings, instead increased taxes and no completed TSNC study. She also states "I think all of us who are elected to represent the taxpayer have a responsibility to do our due diligence..." Agreed, an elected official not doing his/her homework, and not getting the information out to the public on an issue that affects their taxes and Town property is abdicating "responsibility and due diligence." As Dr. Erardi said at the 11/19/14 joint meeting, *the BoE decision (to potentially close a school) involves everyone around this table and the voice of the community.*

What's the rush? Political?

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jim Gaston
18 Main Street