



Village of Bath

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Thank you for allowing myself and all of us the time to speak for the community today. My name is Troy Stone, and I am the mayor of the Village. From the start, I want to say that I did not attend this school. I am not originally from this community. However, my wife went to both schools, as did our three children.

I want to speak this morning about the schools impact on the community and what its loss will mean. First, when I speak about community, I am not speaking about Bath per se. I am speaking about the community of interest which includes Bath, but also Johnville, Beechwood, Holmsville, Moose Mountain and parts in between. More broadly, we all consider ourselves to be "Monquarters", and so the community is really the people that make up area and in particular the children. Indeed the needs of the children are by far the most important reason why everyone is here today.

When we last went through the 409 process, after much deliberation and collaboration within the PSSC and other interested groups, the consensus was to suggest a single building with all students under one roof, was in the best interest of the community. This would also include room for other support services and provide opportunities for recreation and growth for the entire area. The Village of Bath supported this decision. But, one outcome of this decision would be the loss of considerable tax base with the closing of the elementary school. The council knew that the loss of \$\$ could have a substantial impact on our ability to provide recreation that is primarily used by children in the area. Despite the loss, we wanted to continue to provide some service to area residents. Therefore, we resolved to approach the local service districts with a request for support with their tax dollars so that we could continue to provide activities for the area youth. Moreover, it would also continue to allow the municipality to hire staff for these services and provide summer employment for young adults that need the work so support their post-secondary education. On that point, the Village has employed dozens and dozens of students over my nearly 25 years as Mayor. I would add that we have never played favorites on what part of the community they lived in. Some came from Bath some from Holmsville or Beechwood, but they were all Monquarters. It has given these kids an opportunity to learn work and life skills, and most importantly for me, to learn what personal responsibility is and means. Fortunately, the vote for revenue from the LSD was approved because people understood that it takes a Village to raise a child. So, what happens if we lose the community school that we have been waiting for? It may surprise you to know that the building that we are in today provides about \$ 3,000 annually to the Village. Peanuts! The unfinished building next door provide about 10 times

more per year. But, if you or the government choose to leave the community, the building next door will be flattened leaving a \$ 5 million parking lot with little to no tax base and this building with no dollars. The outcome I am afraid will be the total loss of recreation as the Village will simply not have the dollars to continue, and the LSD will not have any better fiscal wherewithal to continue with more support. The youth suffer the loss, all the way from toddler to the 19-year-old summer student.

The school has not just provided economic support. The programs offered or planned to be offered make a difference too many children. Some of this involves the breakfast program that is supported by a local businessman, which without him may not even exist. Sadly, there are too many families with food insecurities that need our help. The simple fact is, the smaller footprint that we need here allows for teachers and staff to make a difference for those who need it. Candidly, I just don't think a large school can accomplish the same thing with these venerable youth and we will ultimately lose them to other harmful distractions.

I know that you have all heard of the Step Ahead program. Some will say that this is an "independent" organization unrelated to education. But let's not be intellectually dishonest about this. It is clearly connected to the broad vision of the department and undeniably has a franchise in preparing children to enter the school system. The program provides a safe space for children and a place for them to be before, during and after school. Perhaps most importantly however, as part of its mandate it has identified children that need early intervention with the appropriate professional support. Let's not kid ourselves. The Step Ahead program will not continue beyond Bath if we don't finish the building next door. That would be a shame and will allow venerable kids to fall through the cracks. I don't want to belabor the program...others behind me will speak more articulately about this. But make no doubt, it makes a difference to the community.

We all understand that schools are primarily for education. However, we rarely talk about a school's impact on health outcomes for students. A school provides a safe haven for children from low socioeconomic status. We know education is one pillar of social determinants of health that has a lasting impact on changing long-term outcomes for kids. A smaller school provides opportunities for kids to participate in programs that they might not otherwise be able to do in a larger school, especially during their formative years, and especially in a rural area such as our own. Providing schooling to a group of children from an average background that are not exactly set up for success is crucial to long term outcomes from a health perspective and directly affects the community.

Lastly, losing the school will be a disincentive for people to live here, resulting in for instance fewer volunteers for basketball, soccer or music and declining social infrastructure such as churches and parks. We will just become a dot on a map. I am not going to opine on what should be done in F-B. It is not my bailiwick. They have their needs and we have ours. I know that you can say that by closing 5 schools in favour of one will remove 7-8 million in future capital costs, and save 800 or 900 k a year in operating costs. We can do the math. But, it is not always about

dollars. Some will say its only 8 km. But, there are plenty of families in this area where it might as well be 80 km's. The facts are that a local school has a greater chance to allow children with parents who are unable to support success, to succeed. I think you have an opportunity to create a win/win for the 409 study area. You can meet F-B needs, and ours too. I think we all realize you will have much to consider and I do not envy you the task. But, a school for this community will provide positive outcomes that you can't put a \$ sign on. I know that you as a board and the staff are all passionate about why you are here. But, I ask you be compassionate for our needs when you deliberate you decision.

I thank you again for your time and attention.

Troy Stone, CPA, CA
Mayor, Village of Bath

