

Blossburg Improvement Association

P.O. Box 126 • Blossburg • Pennsylvania • 16912

November 13, 2009

Board of Education
Southern Tioga School District
241 Main St.
Blossburg, PA 16912

Dear Board Members:

On behalf of the Blossburg Improvement Association, I am writing to you to express our deep concern about your upcoming decision whether to close or renovate North Penn High School.

Since 1971, Blossburg Improvement Association has been investing in Blossburg. After the downtown fire in 1968 and the Agnes flood in 1972, we developed Riverside Plaza. Although we have sold most of the units in the plaza, we continue to own two key properties: one is rented by the Bloss Holiday Market and the other is rented by the United States Postal Service. In 2004, when the Borough of Blossburg, in partnership with Blossburg V.I.B.E. and Blossburg Improvement Association, applied for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Main Street program, DCED considered these two core businesses crucial to the definition of a healthy downtown, along with the pharmacy and the schools. The borough's grant application was successful and the state invested over \$65,000 in façade renovations and improvements in the retail district.

Continuing our partnership with V.I.B.E. and the borough, we leveraged the initial DCED grant for additional grants from Rep. Matthew E. Baker, Sen. Joseph Scarnati, Tioga County Housing Authority, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. With our coalition's strong track record, we have pulled in over \$140,000 in grant funding. Most recently, the Bloss Area Swimming Association, another group with which we have strong ties, received a federal grant of \$275,000 for reconstruction of the community swimming pool. The Pool Association has leveraged that grant for another \$275,000 from local community foundations and individual and business donors, including a \$50,000 commitment from Blossburg Improvement Association.

With investments from local, state and federal levels, it is clear that Blossburg is a viable, healthy and supported community. However, all the hours of volunteer time, all the community connections and all the funding may go to waste if the school board decides to close North Penn High School. All these grants were made with the assumption that Blossburg would retain its schools for the foreseeable future.

We are also very concerned with the potential impact on Blossburg's tax base if the school board chooses to close North Penn High School. Boroughs have much heavier tax loads than townships and without the anchor of the schools, people new to the area are much less likely to choose a borough without a full school system than one with such a school system. The lack of a school will create a strong disincentive against investing in Blossburg's future from the perspective of small business owners and residents. The resulting loss of property tax base should be a large factor in the school board's decision-making process; without a strong Blossburg, the school district is weakened. Additionally, Blossburg's loss of tax revenue will impact its ability to maintain and enhance the Island Park recreational complex, which the school district currently rents for a sum absurdly below market value.

Schools are a crucial element of a healthy community and strong communities are an essential support for strong schools. A kindergarten through eighth grade facility is insufficient to support Blossburg's continued economic and community development. We strongly urge you to renovate North Penn High School.

Sincerely,

James J. Bogaczyk
President

cc: Geoff Rakoski, Vice President
Margaret E. Wesneski, Treasurer
Heidi I. Jones, Secretary
Charles Freeberg
David A. Jones
George D. Lloyd
Robert H. Martin
Carol J. Tama