

Summary of remarks
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I. Regulatory Compliance

- a. The feasibility study provided to the board does not meet state requirements: School Construction Reimbursement Criteria (24 P.S. §7-733).¹ The study must include the following elements:
 - An appraisal of each facility's ability to meet current and planned educational program requirements;
 - The degree to which present facilities meet reasonably current construction standards;
 - An estimated cost of necessary repairs and improvements; and
 - Documentation regarding authors' credentials for producing the document.While the document provided by Quad 3 does contain a lump sum estimate of the cost of the renovation and reconstruction of North Penn High School, there is no detailed breakdown of the costs and it does not distinguish between necessary and ideal renovation costs. It does not contain any of the other required items.
- b. According to the state regulation, "the entire building must be brought up to prevailing educational standards and reasonably current construction standards." The feasibility study does not address educational standards or construction standards.
- c. The regulation also urges school districts "evaluate their early child infrastructure as part of renovation, expansion or new construction of an elementary school." According to Superintendent Kalata at the Nov. 2, 2009 work session, the three pre-kindergarten classrooms currently housed at each of the three elementary schools would be evicted if North Penn High School closed. This clearly does not comply with the regulation. The pre-kindergarten programs help children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn. For every \$1 invested in pre-kindergarten programs, taxpayers save \$6 in decreased special education classes, decreased welfare expenditures and decreased juvenile and adult detention costs.
- d. The regulation also urges school districts to plan school construction projects "in the context of sustainable community development." By closing North Penn High School, the district would seriously harm Blossburg. This clearly does not comply with the regulation.

1. ¹ <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/cwp/view.asp?A=11&Q=56801>

II. Tax base: Incentive for disinvestment.

When schools close, vacated communities lose jobs, population, services, retail businesses, and property tax values, and other community institutions significantly weaken.² Although the impact is not immediate, over a 10-year period, it would be clear and devastating as the disinvestment accumulates. As property values decline in Blossburg, the tax burden will have to be shifted to other parts of the district, increasing taxes for everyone unnecessarily. Additionally, Blossburg Borough may not be able to provide its current level of services, including maintenance and enhancement of Island Park, creating a downward spiral in which Blossburg becomes an unattractive choice for people seeking to live in Southern Tioga School District, and an incentive for people to choose to leave Blossburg.

III. Strong communities are worth investment.

Blossburg is a thriving, healthy community. We have attracted over \$400,000 in federal, state and local grants since 2004 because we have shown the state and federal governments that Blossburg has the core components of a healthy community. We are a building on that core by renovating our community swimming pool, building a skateboarding facility, renovating retail property facades, and building community through civic participation and events such as the Blossburg State Coal Festival and the Fall Festival.

IV. Small schools work.³

Small schools have higher graduation rates, lower rates of violence, and overall better educational outcomes. Small schools, close to where people live, The Blossburg Elementary - North Penn High School complex functions seamlessly to provide a close, caring, cohesive community for our children to thrive.

V. Identity and community.

North Penn High School and its panther mascot are essential components of the identity of Blossburg and the surrounding area, as deeply rooted as the coal mining history of the area. More people interact with the school than any other social institution. The board has heard from residents repeatedly asking about and defending North Penn's athletic programs because the athletic programs provide a sense of community cohesion and identity. Schools provide a focus for civic participation and community development that cannot be replicated or replaced.

Smart renovation is the only option that will sustain the school district and save Blossburg.

² For peer-reviewed studies on the impact of schools on community development, see <http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/crec/topics/development>. For studies on the impact of school consolidation, see <http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/crec/topics/consolidation>.

³ Small schools work research: <http://www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=2038>