2020 Candidate Questionnaire - School Regionalization - 2 short questions!

As a 2020 candidate for Middletown or Newport Town Councils or School Committee - CITIZENS EXPLORING SCHOOL UNIFICATION is asking ALL candidates to REPLY to 2 questions below. The responses will be published on our website, social media, and with all local media outlets. CANDIDATES who DO NOT RESPOND to the survey - CESU will publish that you DECLINED to participate in the survey. DEADLINE to complete is August 31, 2020, *if you have questions about this survey - send an email to info@cesu.news We will reply within 24-hours.

Email address *

lawrencefrank@att.net

First and Last Name *

Lawrence Frank

What position are you running for? *

☑ Town Council

☐ School Committee

Do you support an updated study of school regionalization between Newport and Middletown? *

◉ Yes

◯ No

◯ Other:

Why OR Why Not? Please describe your position in detail (1,000-word limit)! *

"The Coming Baby Deficit", an article in the August 3, 2020 issue of Business Week,
talks about the declining birth rate in the United States. The article speaks about the "fertility rate", also called the "replacement rate'". This is the number of births needed to maintain the current population in the United States. Decreasing fertility rates reflect the slower growth of younger generations, resulting in negative population growth.

In 2006, the fertility rate was 2.1 children per woman, a number that "is what is required to stabilize the population over the long term". The fertility rate has steadily declined since then. In 2019 it was 1.68. This number is well below the "replacement rate". This demographic trend impacts all facets of government, including social security payments and reimbursement rates for local governments. There is a social impact as well, with a shortage of people to care for a growing elderly population.

And one more thing, education. Schools in Middletown and Newport have a student deficit. Neither has enough students of offer the range of courses required for a high quality education. Just the opposite. In 2009 the annual enrollment in Middletown was 2500 students, in 2019 it fell to 2200. In 2009 Middletown spent $13,500.00 to educate each student. In 2019 that number was $18,000.00. At the same time, reported measures of "Academic Performance", defined as "Proficient in Meeting Expectations" dropped from over 80% to less than 40%.

High schools enrollment will continue to decline as the fertility rate drops. Course offerings will become even more limited and seniors upon graduation will be less prepared for college, or any career that requires advanced forms of education.

Long serving members of the Middletown town council have failed to address these educational challenges. In rejecting school consolidation, council president Robert Sylvia speaks to the primacy of the "social aspects" of a Middletown high school education. Sylvia does not speak to academic excellence. Councilman Paul Rodrigues launched personal attacks on the school board when they appeared before the council. Despite his many years on the council, he takes no responsibility for the current situation. And again, no mention of academic excellence. Councilman Rick Lombardi, referenced "Title 1"(Title 1's purpose is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high quality education.), as the reason he was against school consolidation. Lombardi said of Newport "Their challenges are different from ours. They have an urban school, they have different challenges than we do. If we were to combine with them we would become a Title 1 school."

Hostility to the social, economic and racial makeup of Newport schools seems to be an unspoken reason for not wanting to combine the two high schools.

It is time for a change. Middletown deserves a town council that will look forward to the future, leaving behind a past that no longer exists.

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