

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 *

prod@cox.net

First and Last Name *

Paul Rodrigues

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: I would if State Education Article 16 was modified.

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

I would consider an updated study of school regionalization between Middletown and Newport if the Article 16 was modified. Article 16 states that when you create a regional school district, a regional school board has to be created. This regional school board would be made up of representatives between Middletown and Newport. The majority of the board would be determined by what town has the majority of the children that makes up the regional school. So, if Newport had more children attending the regional school, then they would have more representation on the regional school board. This regional school board would determine the annual budget for the regional school. Article 16 clearly states that whatever annual budget percent that the regional school board requests, you have to give it to them. So, for example, if the regional school board requests a 4% increase every year, the town would have to give them 4% without question. I used 4% because that is what our school committee requests every year. If the Town Council gave them their annual 4% budget request, taxes would be unsustainable. Middletown has become a very solvent community over the past 16 or so years. This did not happen by losing control of their budget. It took strong financial discipline and leadership to accomplish solvency. Given the fact that roughly .70 cents or 70 % of every tax dollar goes to education, that only leaves .30 cent or 30% to run the rest of the town departments. I would not want Newport representatives making financial decisions for 70% of Middletown's residents tax dollars without any say about it. Could you imagine losing control of 70% of your household income? This is just not sustainable. This would, in my opinion, increase taxes annually and drive residents out of town without any say. That just does not seem right to me. Now, if article 16 could be modified so that each town would continue to control their own budgets, then I would consider an updated study of regionalization. Middletown's current total school population is about 2100 students. Newport has roughly the same student population. Middletown used to have about 1200 children at the High School. Now, Middletown has roughly 600 children at the High School. Currently, Newport has roughly 600 students at the High School. When you look at the number of children between both communities, it would make sense to study regionalization. However, bigger does always mean better. What makes anyone think that by combining a failing school system in Newport and a mediocre school system in Middletown, that this would be successful? Their may be better course offerings if combined. Having said that, why can't we get all three island communities to get together and share course offerings for each communities students and leaving each city or town to control their own financial decisions and financial future. Most people think that when you regionalize schools, there are a lot of cost savings. In fact, there are no savings at all. We have studied this about 5 years ago. Just by giving a school system more money every year does not mean your child will receive a better education. We have great teachers, but when the curriculum constantly changes, it doesn't equal a better education. We need to stop teach children how to pass a test that each school is rated on by the State. We need to actual educate our children, then and only then will they be better educated. Also, Middletown over the years has funded our schools infrastructure to keep the schools in great shape. In fact, the previous Middletown Town Council supported a \$10 million dollar bond that was approved by the voters to improve our schools infrastructure at NO COST to the taxpayers. If the town was not making its own financial decisions, this would not have been possible. In summary, I am not completely opposed and I would support an updated study of regionalization if Article 16 is modified to let each community that represents a regional school district control their own budget and financial future.

Thank You,

Paul M. Rodrigues

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