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Arlington Advocate editorial

1 message

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Thu, Oct 1, 2015 at 10:33 AM

To: Karen Fitzgerald <kfitzgerald@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Cc: Kathleen Bodie <kbodie@arlington.k12.ma.us>

Please make sure the committee sees this wonderful editorial from the Arlington Advocate:

<http://arlington.wickedlocal.com/article/20151001/NEWS/151009481>

Editorial: Applause for Arlington's School Committee

The Arlington School Committee should be applauded for its approach to solving the town's school crowding crisis.

The temptation surely exists to hire a consultant like HMFH Architects to develop and shortlist a handful of options, without significant public input prior to the board's final vote. It has happened in many districts in the past, and will doubtless happen in many districts in the future. Such a process would be simple, fast, and steered by experts who have extensive experience dealing with these challenges, able to come up with solutions and foresee problems ordinary civilians would have a hard time spotting. One or two hearings would give residents an opportunity to feel like their concerns had been heard, but not enough of an opportunity to derail a process that some might argue is so complex it should only be left up to experts.

Any process like that, though, would run directly counter to the spirit of democracy and Arlington's long-standing traditions of civic engagement. With a 252-member Town Meeting and numerous boards and commissions, Arlington is rife with volunteers who are directly plugged into the machinery of town government.

Repeated calls for more ideas coming from School Committee Chairman Paul Schlichtman and Superintendent Kathy Bodie are important to encourage Arlingtonians to make their voices heard. More important, though, are the Committee's twin decisions to, first, spend several months wrestling with the crowding problem, and second, to actively invite other town bodies to join the conversation. By broadening the range of committees and boards involved in finding a solution to the crowding issue, the School Committee is also drawing in the numerous citizen activists involved in, but not serving with, each group. We sincerely hope that this will dramatically increase the number and range of voices offering and commenting on potential solutions.

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