

On behalf of

I could not

Thanks for hearing us out today, sorry ^I stay for the whole day but thank you for listening to my thoughts. The residents of Franklin unanimously voted last fall and agreed we want to do whatever we can do to keep Franklin School run locally. The answer to saving money on our property taxes is not to sacrifice our children's education, they are our future. Franklin School teachers/staff are not over paid for their efforts to educate our children and they are doing a very good job, Franklin remains one of the top schools in the County and State. For the cost of the college education to be a teacher and the salary they make after, we are very lucky.

As I understand it, the Act 46 plan is to eventually merge with Swanton and Highgate Elementary School to send our children to Swanton School because there's room there and it will cut costs. As a mother I don't think it is fair to add an additional hour to our children's bus ride each day, as that will be a very long day for a 5 year old. Also, preschool has been traditionally been a half day so that adds at least an hour to every parent's day for transportation one way or the other, for working families that's likely to make it so their children can't attend. Franklin was one of the leading schools with preschool education and its 5 minutes down the road for most of the community. My daughter will be 2 in October and we've attended many Franklin Rec Dept events at the school, it's a big part of community in a small town and it will be very sad if the State Board of Education can't realize what they're doing by closing the center of our community. I've noticed in Montgomery they have signs out, 'Our Community, Our School' kudos to you for getting them printed and distributed for people to take notice!

I'm a Real Estate Broker and on my listings in Franklin I highlight the Elementary School as a benefit of living in Franklin for the quality education it provides and also the community events. If it gets closed, has anyone thought about what that will do to the local real estate market? It's not going to help! It'll be far worse than the dreaded wind turbines... When families asks where the local elementary school is and I tell them 2 towns over, a half hour away, they're not going to want to buy here anymore. People want to live near their work, stores and their children's school, if the school isn't here all we've got left is a small convenience store with no gas and a semi-polluted lake (but that's a story for a different day). If we really want to help our property taxes the best thing to do is to encourage more business in the area, more jobs means more people and more money in the area to help with property taxes and the cost of education.

On behalf of all the people who, like me, work and couldn't take as much time as we wanted to today; I want to make sure and remind you again that we live in a democracy and we already voted, unanimously not to merge. I invite you to come to our small school and experience community, to us, its not a waste of money but a worthwhile investment in our future.

Dianna Benoit Kittell, Real Estate Broker for KW Vermont, Mom and Franklin Resident