



# Chappaqua Central School District

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Victoria Bayard Tipp  
President, Board of Education

November 23, 2020

Dear Chappaqua Central School District Community:

We are writing today to inform you of proposed zoning changes in Chappaqua that could significantly impact the Chappaqua Central School District's tax base, future financial condition, and quality of educational programs.

The Board of Education is deeply concerned that the New Castle Town Board's rezoning plan, as it stands in its current form, could negatively impact our school system.

As background, the New Castle Town Board ("Town") is moving forward with enacting a new type of zoning for the Chappaqua Hamlet called a Form-Based Code ("FBC"). The Town's proposed rezoning under the FBC would allow for four and five-story mixed-use retail and residential buildings. This could result in approximately 1000 new rental and/or condominium units being built in downtown Chappaqua. As part of this rezoning initiative, the Town was required under NYS law to commission an Environmental Impact Study. A draft of this study, called the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement ("DGEIS"), was sent to the Chappaqua Central School District ("CCSD") on September 29, 2020, and was received by the Board of Education ("Board") shortly thereafter.

The Town's DGEIS projects that if approximately 1,000 new residential units are built in Chappaqua, it will result in an increase of 96 additional students in the CCSD. Our Board questioned the accuracy of these projections and, as fiduciaries of our District, contracted with independent consultants to examine key issues, including:

- Increased enrollment that may well exceed the DGEIS projected increase in all of our schools due to the build-out of numerous residential units in the Chappaqua Hamlet;
- Negative tax impact based upon the construction of new residential units taxed at lower condominium or commercial rates, causing increased enrollment costs to be borne disproportionately by residents of single-family homes taxed at a higher rate;
- Potential degradation in the quality of education resulting from a significant increase in enrollment without a proportional increase in tax revenue.

We strongly believe that the Board and the CCSD are in the best position to assess potential impacts of the Town's proposed FBC on our schools. Our consultants will prepare independent enrollment projections, generate a fiscal impact analysis specifically for the CCSD, and conduct a District-wide Building Capacity Study. This is the data and analysis required to determine the realistic impacts of this proposed zoning change on the School District. We informed the Town that we have commissioned these critical studies and once complete, we will provide the results to the Town and the community.

The Board has been actively involved in reviewing and commenting on the Town's proposed zoning legislation. We encourage the community to participate in this important development that could profoundly impact the character of the town and the quality of education in our schools. Below are some of the steps the Board has taken to date regarding our concerns:

- Submitted two letters to the Town requesting more time for the Board to examine and report potential impacts to the School District.
  - [Letter of October 15, 2020](#) & [Letter of October 26, 2020](#)
- Commented on the School District's concerns to the Town during the public hearings held on October 27, 2020 and November 10, 2020.
- Submitted two letters to the Town as the School District's written comments as part of the Town's Public Hearing process.
  - [Letter of October 29, 2020](#) with a [preliminary review](#) from CCSD consultant & [Letter of November 17, 2020](#)

**The Town is currently collecting public comments on the DGEIS, and is scheduled to hold another public hearing on the matter on December 8, 2020. The Town is also accepting written comments at either [publiccomment@mynewcastle.org](mailto:publiccomment@mynewcastle.org) or [chappaquaforward@mynewcastle.org](mailto:chappaquaforward@mynewcastle.org).** You can review all of the public comments that have been submitted, including all of the letters between the District and the Town, at this [link](#).

As interested community members, we urge you to stay informed on these important developments and make your voices heard. Please know that we are doing all we can to ensure that our CCSD students continue to receive the best public education possible.

Sincerely,

The Chappaqua Central School District Board of Education

Victoria Bayard Tipp, President  
Holly McCall, Vice President  
Hilary Grasso, Member  
Warren Messner, Member  
Jane Kimmel Shepardson, Member