

Select Board Public Comment 12/21/23

1. Good evening. I'm Tim Smith, Julie Finnegan, and Toni Lobdell... the Castleton delegation to the Slate Valley School Board.
2. I have a brief public comment, to close the circle, regarding an article in the Rutland Herald last week that spoke to a notice that accompanied all property tax bills this past August.
3. I'm not here to argue about the subjective nature by which facts can be presented. Rather, to simply acknowledge how complex school funding and educational tax matters can be.
4. A reminder that we have a State-wide education funding model. Education taxes raised locally here in Castleton, don't stay in Castleton. They go to the State educational fund, where politicians in Montpelier get to debate the usage, and deployment of these funds, using various metrics. We share in the costs to educate all students in Vermont. For example, Castleton taxpayers are helping to subsidize the \$200 million-plus new high school and tech center in Burlington. It's not just education spending within Slate Valley, but education spending across the entire state, which ultimately determines the homestead education tax rate.
5. Local school boards have very little control over most components of education spending. Slate Valley is a fiscally conservative school board. We have made difficult, and disciplined choices over the past several years. We prioritize needs over wants. Accordingly, our equalized homestead tax rate has declined in 4 of the previous 5 years. Our spending per pupil consistently ranks in the bottom 25% in comparison to other school districts across the state.
6. We view the Select Board as partners with a common goal... to incentivize more people to live, work, recreate, and raise families here in our community. The Select Board helps carry this common message to all residents. We would be happy to present to the Select Board, once finalized, our school budget and address any questions or concerns you might have.
7. Thank you for the time this evening. We appreciate your service to the community and Merry Christmas.