

Voices Needed

To the Editor:

January 8th's Region 14 BOE hearing was to address residents' concerns over the board's decision to locate fifth graders under one roof by busing elementary children, some as young as 4-1/2, far from their home communities, Bethlehem's third and fourth graders to Woodbury, Woodbury's K-2 graders to Bethlehem.

Asked if it could show concrete evidence that fifth graders' performance has been compromised due to the grade being split between Woodbury's middle and elementary schools, the board answered, "No."

Asked if they would go forward with reconfiguration anyway - though it means removing the computer lab and stretching already challenged BES water/septic systems to accommodate more students, the Board answered, "Yes."

Bus routes would be timed, said Dr. Cronin, with 45-minutes each way the target. He's "pretty sure" rides won't exceed 45 minutes. Will they account for delays when students are out sick or late? Buses must wait, idling, for three extra minutes.

Were there no concerns about pollution and extra costs caused by this monumental effort to complicate the lives of our youngest students? The board offered a communal shrug to pollution and inexact cost figures.

It was like standing before the governing body of a dictatorial regime. According total devotion to Leader Cronin whose experience as educator and superintendent is limited to Naugatuck's school system, the board gave patronizing lip service to residents' concerns and dismissed alternative suggestions as being at odds with currently-in-vogue, but ever-evolving curriculum theory.

Woodbury/Bethlehem residents: we have ourselves to blame for not passing the renovation budget - it failed by 26 votes. Please stand with concerned Region 14 residents. Call the Board at 263-4339. Demand another budget vote. This is a democratic society still, but we need your voice to stop reconfiguration.

Connie Conway
Woodbury
