



SMITHTOWN  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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# **Citizens' Advisory Committee on Housing and Instruction**

## **Report to the Board of Education**

**March 28, 2020**

# **SMITHTOWN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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2019-2020

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**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON INSTRUCTION AND HOUSING**  
**Report to the Board of Education**

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# **I. Recommendation to Form a Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing**

## **A. Charge to the Committee: September 24, 2019**

Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, be it RESOLVED, that the following charge to the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing be approved:

Smithtown Central School District  
Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing (CACIH)  
2019-2020

### **CHARGE TO HOUSING COMMITTEE**

Since our most recent peak in enrollment in 2009, when the Smithtown CSD student population was approximately 10,800, the District's enrollment has been in steady decline. In fact, the District has been decreasing in size by approximately 268 students per year since the last housing report was published in 2014. In 2019, Smithtown graduated 805 seniors and enrolled 511 kindergarten students, and our current total enrollment is 8,448.

The 2014-15 Citizens Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing recommended that an elementary school be closed no sooner than 2016-17 and that a future committee study the feasibility of closing a middle school for the 2022-23 school year. They also recommended that any future closing be accompanied by a comprehensive study of full redistricting. (Note: the District closed Branch Brook Elementary School at the end of the 2016-17 school year.)

Due to the significant levels of continued enrollment decline, the Board of Education feels it is time to engage in an earnest study of the District's housing of students in a way that preserves the high quality instructional programming Smithtown is known for. To that end, they have established a 2019 Citizens' Advisory Committee.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing will:

- Analyze short- and long-term enrollment projections.
- Analyze the instructional and financial impacts of maintaining the housing status quo vs. making changes in housing patterns.
- Study the feasibility and advisability of the following changes in housing patterns:
  - Closing an elementary school(s)
  - Closing a middle school
  - Combining the two high schools
  - Revising current attendance zones, including the consideration of a complete redistricting
- For feasible scenarios, analyze impact on:
  - Instructional program
    - Including long-term impact on core program equity and availability, Special Education program delivery and locations, special area instruction, and Academic Intervention Services

- Budget
    - Including staffing, facilities, and transportation
  - Students and Community values
    - Ex. Student transitions, neighborhood schools, etc.
  - Address elementary school attendance zones and moving-up patterns.
  - By spring 2020: Develop and present a report to the Board of Education outlining recommendations and including the instructional, financial, and other benefits and concerns for each recommended scenario. Such recommendations will address the anticipated housing needs of the Smithtown Central School District for the next five to ten years.
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CACIH Committee co-chair responsibilities include the following: planning and facilitating the Smithtown Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing, creating meeting agendas, running 1-2 night committee meetings per month (schedule to be determined by co-chairs), communicating with District liaisons, developing a long-range K-12 housing plan that addresses the District's decreasing enrollment and budgetary constraints, developing a report to the Board of Education with the committee's recommendations for any changes to the housing of students, and presenting the report to the Board of Education.

Motion by Frank James, second by Mandi Kowalik.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: Michael Saidens, Mandi Kowalik, Frank James, Jerry R Martusciello, Michael Catalanotto

## B. Committee Members

### CACIH Co-Chairs

Judith Elias  
Charles Rollins

### PTA Representatives

Accompsett ES	Laura Power	Accompsett MS	Jennifer Camilleri
Dogwood ES	Maria Falcone	Great Hollow MS	Courtney Palazzo
Mills Pond ES	Leslie Eisen		Andre Poulis (alternate)
Mount Pleasant ES	Christopher Collins	Nesaquake MS	Jon-David Lenard
	Amy Jaekle (alternate)	Smithtown HS East	Karen Wontrobski-Ricciardi
Saint James ES	Heather Coniglio	Smithtown HS West	Julie Indovino
	Michelle Nestor (alternate)		
Smithtown ES	Stephen Bonasera		
Tackan ES	Kristin Tufo		

### Community at Large

James Connors	Robert Foster	Richard Healy	
Michael Lampasona	Claire Mahoney	Thomas McDaid	Philip Weiss

### Union Representatives

ASPN – Nurses	Nancy Guardino	SSEA – Civil Service	Michalina Rigrod
	Elaine Mangino (alternate)	SSGA – Security Guards	TBD
SSAA – Administrators	John Coady	STA – Teachers	Keely Schuppert
	Michael Mastrangelo		Mary Curran-Hernandez
	John Scmillio		Laura Spencer
	Ireen Westrack		
	Kevin Simmons (alternate)		

### District Support Committee

Mary Augugliaro	Transportation Supervisor
Robert Boccio	Systems Specialist
Jennifer Bradshaw	Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Neil Katz	Assistant Superintendent for Personnel
Daniel Leddy	Director of Facilities
John Nolan	Director of Information Technology Services
Paul Strader	Executive Director of Curriculum
Andrew Tobin	Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations
Mona Tobin	Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services

## **II. Executive Summary**

### **A. Introduction**

- In the March 2015 CACIH Report to the Board of Education, the committee recommended that the Board charge a future CACIH to study the feasibility of closing a middle school for the 2022-23 school year.
- In light of the continuing decline in enrollment, on September 24, 2019, the Board of Education of the Smithtown Central School District approved a charge to establish a Citizens' Advisory Committee to study (see charge)
- The District solicited representatives from across the district, including a representative from each school building, from each bargaining unit, and from the community at large. The District hired facilitators Judith Elias and Charles Rollins to conduct the meetings and fulfill the committee's charge. While previous housing committees restricted the community at large representatives to those without students in the district, this committee accepted all seven applicants without restriction, six of whom had students, and resulting in only one representative on the committee without a student in the district.

### **B. Summary of Work**

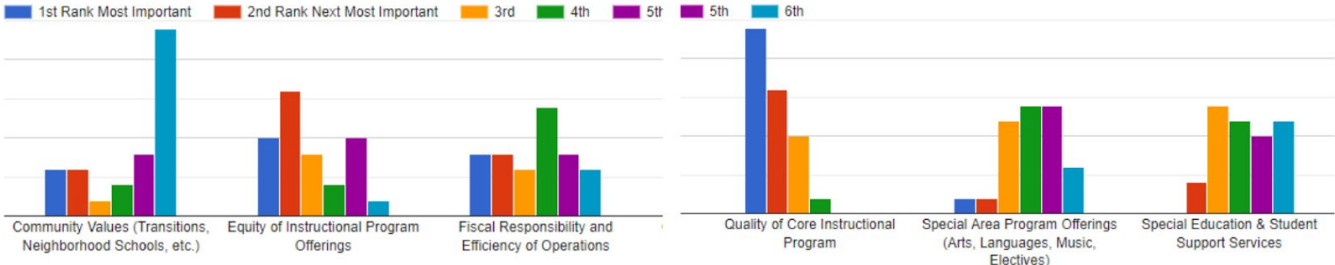
According to its charge by the Board of Education, the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Instruction and Housing (CACIH) met diligently from October 30, 2019, through February 26, 2020, over a total of nine meetings, to analyze the District's housing needs over the next several years and to make a recommendation to address the housing needs of the Smithtown Central School District in such a way that will preserve the quality of its instructional program and promote fiscal responsibility in an era of declining enrollment.

The committee studied the details of their charge, including an analysis of short- and long-term enrollment projections, the instructional and financial impacts of maintaining the current housing status versus making changes in housing patterns, studying the feasibility and advisability of closing an elementary school, closing a middle school, closing a high school, and revising attendance zones.

The committee studied the impact that closing a school would have on instructional program, budget, and students and community values; discussed the district’s moving up patterns from elementary through high school, and developed this report to represent the process as well as conclusions of their analysis.

**C. Decision-making Process**

The committee’s work began with presentations and analysis on topics foundational to their recommendation development. This was followed by a survey of the committee to solicit the values and priorities that would guide their decision-making. While several committee members expressed that they had some difficulty ranking their priorities, the committee’s top priority was clearly the preservation of a quality instructional program followed by equity of instructional program. Fiscal responsibility came in as the third most important priority, followed by community values. Rich discussions were had regarding the importance of students’ well-being and the need to maintain that as a consideration. To the extent possible, decisions were reached by consensus. In the case where consensus could not be reached, the committee participated in a confidential vote.





## D. Recommendations

### 1. Feasibility and advisability of closing a school:

- a. **Elementary:** The committee's analysis found that in order to maintain current and desired quality instructional programs, it is neither feasible nor advisable to close an elementary school in the foreseeable future. By consensus, the committee recommended against closing an elementary school.
- b. **Middle:** Based on enrollment trends, it is possible to close a middle school as early as the 2022-23 school year. The committee considered the pros and cons of doing so (detailed later in this report). There was a clear lack of consensus among the committee on this recommendation, so the committee held a vote. The committee voted 13-12 not to close a middle school.
- c. **High:** It is not possible to house the district's entire high school population in a single high school in the foreseeable future. By consensus, the committee recommended against closing a high school.

### 2. Attendance Zones and Moving-Up Patterns:

- a. **Elementary:** The general sense of the committee was that there is no need to change elementary attendance zones. It will not yield fiscal savings and may upset community values unnecessarily.
- b. **Middle:** The committee achieved consensus that if we do not close a middle school, we should analyze the possibility of better balancing the enrollment among the three middle schools, and that we should maintain a roughly equal number of students who split from GHMS into HSE and HSW.
- c. **High:** The committee agreed that we should do our best to continue to balance enrollment at the two high schools in order to maintain equity of programmatic offerings.

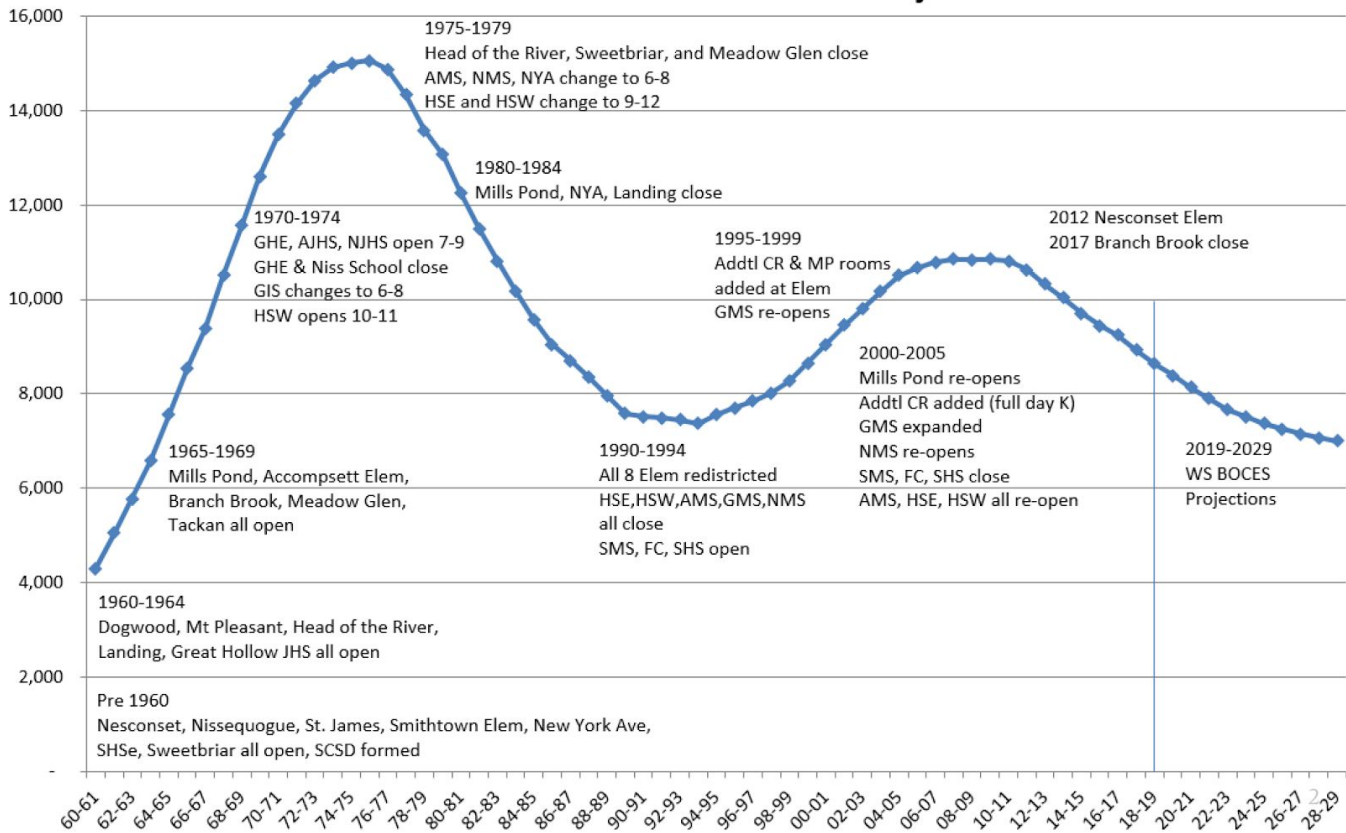
**d. Overall Recommendation:** The general sense of the committee was to recommend that additional analysis occur to more deeply study redistricting. One dissenting opinion was that we recommend doing nothing and not consider changing any attendance zones.

### **III. Enrollment Analysis**

**A. Historical Enrollment:** County-wide school enrollment has been in decline since 2008. Smithtown Central School District has seen significant population fluctuation since 1960, reaching its highest peak of approximately 15,000 in the mid-1970's, and its more recent peak of approximately 10,800 in 2007 and 2009. Similar to the rest of Suffolk County, Smithtown's school enrollment has been in steady decline since 2009. Elementary enrollment decline began in 2005, which led to the closing of Nesconset Elementary School in 2012 and Branch Brook Elementary School in 2017.

As per Western Suffolk BOCES' analysis and presentation to the CACIH on October 30, 2019, "The district recorded a loss of 2,205 students during the historical period 2008-2018. Enrollment declines

## Smithtown Central School District Historic Enrollment 1960-2018 with WS BOCES Projections 2019-2029



**B. Current Enrollment:** On BEDS day, October, 2019, the District’s K-12 enrollment was 8,416 students. Elementary (K-5) enrollment was 3,330; middle school enrollment was 2,048; and high school enrollment was 3,029.

**C. Enrollment Projections:** As per Western Suffolk BOCES’ analysis, “Enrollment declines are expected to continue during the next five years, with an additional loss of 1,123 students projected by 2023. Smaller losses are projected in the elementary and middle grades when compared to the last ten years, while the high school grades will see more significant losses.”

## **IV. Fiscal Analysis**

### **A. Historical Perspective**

On November 20, 2019, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Andrew Tobin provided a financial and facilities overview, which included a historical review of the district's period of financial instability from 2009-2016 due to recession, the end of federal stimulus funds, pension expense increases, the loss of state aid, and property tax cap legislation. During that period, the district experienced significant budget reductions, the use of fund balance and reserves, and the closure of Nesconset Elementary (2012) and Branch Brook Elementary (2017) due to declining enrollment.

### **B. Fiscal Trends and Concerns**

Mr. Tobin also reviewed the more recent history in the district of relatively good financial circumstances (2016-present) due to economic expansion and financial market growth, pension expenses decreasing and stabilizing, the restoration of state aid (Gap Elimination Adjustment restoration), and community support for the budget. This period saw the addition of instructional programs and the replenishment of and addition to reserves.

Future budgets depend on several key factors, such as the state of the economy, pension costs, state aid, and the property tax cap. The more recent economic downturn due to the Coronavirus is a factor that came only after the conclusion of the committee's analysis and as a result, the committee operated under the premise that there were no near-term financial concerns for the District or the economy as a whole. Unfortunately, each of those key factors, and fiscal parameters in general, are now precarious at best based on the uncertain economic outlook.

**V. Redistricting and Closure Analysis:**

**A. Capacity Analysis**

The committee analyzed the overall capacity of each building and whether or not there was sufficient space to close a building at each level (elementary, middle, and high school). This analysis took into account the changing nature of district programming and the desire to reserve space for purposes such as Social and Emotional Learning and sensory rooms, meet the office space needs of an increased social work and counseling staff, and to maintain the spaces currently used for special programs including art and music.

Committee members met in groups to discuss and report back on three questions:

- 1) Is it *possible* to close a school at each level?
- 2) If so, when?
- 3) What is the potential impact of closing a school at that level?

Below are the analyses of the committee groups for each level.

**B. Closing an Elementary School**

- 1) Is it *possible* to close an elementary school?
  - a) Yes, assuming high capacity (95-100%)
- 2) If so, during which year(s)? 2020 or 2021, but only with redistricting
- 3) What potential impact does closing an elementary school have?

<b>Values</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>-</b>
Community Values	Increased programming (band, SCOPE	Social/emotional/wellness impact transition Can only do so at 100% Capacity Less space for events/programs,

		Fewer tickets available Causes redistricting
Equity of Program	Better equity with fewer physical locations (marginal)	Lack of space to offer additional programs/services in all buildings
Fiscal Responsibility	Save \$	Maintaining empty property Minimal fiscal benefit not worth it Possible additional staff needs for larger schools (ex. Assist. Principal)
Quality of Program		Increased class sizes Movement of special needs classes to different buildings
Other		Increased transportation times

### C. Closing a Middle School

1. Is it *possible* to close a middle school?
  - a) Yes.
2. If so, during which year(s)? Analysis varied from 2022 to 2024
3. What potential impact does closing a middle school have?

Values	+	-
Community Values	Increased program (band) Over time would align elementary/middle/high schools (no "split")	Travel far outside neighborhoods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Redistricting</li> <li>● Kids changing schools</li> </ul> Impact on sports, extracurricular clubs Larger classes Transition period of redistricting select schools (possibility of grandfather in to minimize impact)

Equity of Program	Offer more programs, greater equity, possibly offer more extracurricular programs Lose first choice in languages	
Fiscal Responsibility	Plant savings Administrator savings	Still need to budget for same # of students and programs
Quality of Program	More electives Quality maintained as enrollment declines	
Other		Changing population Not steady each year Longer commute to school

#### **D. Closing a High School**

1. Is it *possible* to close a high school?  
b) No.
2. If so, during which year(s)? N/A
3. What potential impact does closing a high school have? N/A

#### **E. Redistricting**

The consensus of the committee was not to recommend redistricting at this time, and the general sense of the committee was to recommend that additional analysis occur to more deeply study redistricting. One dissenting opinion was that we recommend doing nothing and not consider changing any attendance zones.

## **VI. Additional Comments and Considerations for the Board**

The committee felt that the Smithtown School District was in a financially sound position at the conclusion of their work. Future revenues and expenditures reflected a positive outlook. This impacted a significant number of the committee members to oppose closing a middle school, since to them the savings of approximate \$1.5 million did not warrant the disruption of students and necessitate redistricting. Conversely, those on the committee who were in favor of closing a middle school believed that the \$1.5 million could be better used to ensure that the curriculum offerings would not be compromised and equity of programs guaranteed. The committee's decision was rendered at the February 26 meeting. This was prior to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our state is now in financial flux and this will impact every aspect of the New York State budget. School districts will definitely be affected and because of the financial crisis, our district's budget may be altered.

## **VII. Appendices**

- A. [BOCES Long Range Planning Study 2018-19 Update](#)
- B. Presentations
  - a. [October 30, 2019 - SCSD Demographic and Enrollment Overview](#)
  - b. [November 6, 2019 - Housing our Instructional Program](#)
  - c. [November 20, 2019 - Financial and Facilities Overview](#)
  - d. [December 3, 2019 - Enrollment and Instruction](#)
  - e. [January 30, 2020 - Theoretical Closure Savings and Reconfiguration and Redistricting Analysis](#)
  - f. [February 12, 2020 - Housing](#)
- C. Supporting Documents
  - a. Projected Capacities through 2028
    - i. [Overview](#)
    - ii. [Elementary Detail](#)
    - iii. [Secondary Detail](#)
  - b. [Letter to Committee Members regarding Final Draft May 1, 2020](#)