Village of Caledonia Leadership,

I wanted to take a few minutes to address all of you and to provide you with a few things to think about as you plan for the meeting tonight.

As a concerned citizen of the Village I was in attendance on Monday to hear the presentation given by Ms. Lolli Haws for “Raising Racine”. She seemed like a very nice person who has good intentions and good ideas on how to help improve RUSD; however a few things became very evident to me during the “Raising Racine” presentation.

Ms. Haws three year plan has these three main priorities and according to her if it does not fit into one of these buckets it will not be treated as a priority:

* Raise student achievement, particularly in reading and math
* Close achievement gaps for students of color and special education
* Create positive learning environments for all schools

This issue is not so much about how much we just “hate” RUSD, but as to whether or not RUSD has and is able to meet the needs of those it has been intended to serve. Ms. Haw’s presentation clearly shows that RUSD is not and has not met the needs of the district for quite some time. I pulled my oldest child out of first grade at Olympia Brown 18 years ago because of the violence and lack of achievement I saw in his first grade class, particularly in reading! Unfortunately this year I pulled my nephew from Roosevelt in Racine for the very same reason. He is now being schooled & tutored at St. Matthew’s in **Oak Creek** to bring him up to where he should be for first grade reading. I find this to be very unacceptable as 18 years is plenty enough time for improvement.

RUSD’s new three-year plan seems very well thought out and with good intentions; however as per Ms. Haw’s if it does not fit into the three categories it will not be a priority. Well folks, with that said Caledonia will not be a priority. In fact, Caledonia is not and has not been a priority with RUSD. They are a contributor to the budget and nothing more. If I were running a business and half of my customers in a Village decided to stop visiting my establishment I would want to know why. So why is it that we have not heard from our new superintendent until now? She is aware that we were looking to leave RUSD prior to her employment with RUSD, so wouldn’t we be one of the first groups she would want to address? I can only conclude that she has not reached out to us before this because we are not a priority. If we were a priority she would not have just assumed that because our meetings are on the same night that it would not be possible to meet. I hate to say it, but if she is as aggressive with her 3-year plan as she was about getting into contact with the residents of Caledonia, then success will be very hard for her to achieve.

The way I see it there is an overwhelming reason for you to consider adding the non-binding referendum question to our ballot. Nearly half of your residents have chosen not to enroll their children in RUSD. They avoid enrollment in the following manners:

* Vouchers (if they financially qualify)
* Open enrollment (if they are lucky enough to win this **lottery**)
* Private education (if they are fortunate enough to be able to afford this)
* They simply **move** out of Caledonia

The lack of enrollment from your local residents and their recent vote against the referendum should give you all the reason you need to add a non-binding referendum question to the ballot. As leaders of our Village you have a duty to do your best to ensure the needs of the Village are being met as reasonably as possible. It is obvious that a very vital need for our community is not being met and at a minimum it should be thoroughly investigated. Adding this to the ballot will give our citizens a voice and you a better view of how they feel. Without this I cannot imagine how you will be able to make informed decisions on how to move forward.

I have not joined this “cause” to benefit just myself and my family, but my community. If and when Caledonia succeeds in creating their own school district it will most likely be too late for me and my family but it will still have my full support. Our oldest child is out of college, our middle child is a high school student at Prairie and our youngest child is a student at St. Matthew’s in Oak Creek. We have been fortunate as we have been able to fund alternatives for our children to obtain a good education outside of RUSD. We currently spend $15,000 per year **(yes $15,000)** on tuition costs so that we can adequately educate our children without having to move from Caledonia and quite frankly if not for our family ties here in Caledonia we would have left with many others long ago. How many families in Caledonia do you know that can afford to spend this amount of money annually for non-college level education? Would this encourage you to move a young family to Caledonia? I think that we can all agree that buying a lottery ticket each week as a method of saving for retirement would be ignorant, so why should we ask our community to use a lottery system as a way of properly educating our children?

I look forward to meeting with all of you tonight.

Best Regards,

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