

**JOHN AND KATHY TRUMBULL**

*348 First Avenue*

*Berlin, NH 03570*

December 22, 2021

Berlin City Council,  
Interim City Manager, Pamela LaFlamme  
168 Main Street  
Berlin, NH 03570

Re: Brown School concerns to be read into the record

Dear Mrs. LaFlamme and City Council Representatives;

We are writing concerning the disposition of the Brown School and the proposed decision to sell it to a developer for \$1.00 to be repurposed into low-income housing units.

The taxpayers of Berlin have spent hundreds of thousands over the years maintaining and updating this school, which currently meets code requirements to operate as a school. It was stated that the reason it is being handled in this manner is to bring it onto the tax roll. As people who believe in careful spending, we would love to see our taxes decrease. However, there is a much larger issue not being considered. One might call it "penny wise and pound foolish". Our community character and social benefit of providing options in education is far more significant than providing additional low-income housing. Whether a private or charter school, or post-secondary school opened in the former Brown School, the benefits to the community would be immeasurable. Perhaps it might function as an incubator for new businesses and pop-up stores, or dormitory housing for White Mountain College. Perhaps a college may be looking for a location. Wouldn't that benefit our city? Hasn't our Master Plan update identified a need to retain young citizens? Families may choose to locate to Berlin to enroll their children. More families mean more support for every local business—including stores and restaurants. There could potentially be added value to homes as a result of more families relocating here. The presence of a school, or new business we have not yet conceived of, socially joins the people of the community together, enriching lives--young and old.

The period of time since this building ceased operation has been mostly during the Covid pandemic, a troubling time when many scaled back normal activities and focused on survival, wearing masks, worrying about who in their family was at risk, sick or worse. We lost many as well. To expect people to come forward with proposals for the Brown School's repurposing during this time is unrealistic, as evidenced by the few who actually did so.

Many citizens agree that Berlin does not need additional low-income housing; there are vacancies currently existing in these facilities now. This will be the fourth school building in recent history repurposed into low-income housing, one as recent as the Bartlett School, also conveyed for \$1.00 to New England Family Housing. It is our opinion that the people of Berlin should have some input into this process, as it appears this decision is being managed (or manipulated) by a select few who are not in touch with the will of the citizens. Who determined what the highest and best use is for this building?

We respectfully request that this process be extended out at least 90 days or longer, in order to allow any and all interested parties, organizations, schools, etc. to conduct market studies, building inspection, feasibility studies, and/or needs assessment and present proposals to either purchase or lease this building. Alternatively, the property could be listed with a commercial real estate broker to expand advertising beyond the region. Why limit the scope of possibilities from the start when our city may succeed in attracting a business we all would welcome and ultimately enjoy its presence?

Sincerely,

Kathy & John Trumbull