Pottstown schools better off alone

Last week, the Daniel Boone School Board voted to close the Birdsboro Elementary School and bus Birdsboro students across the river to the Monocacy Elementary Center in Amity Township, three miles away.

Birdsboro's borough manager likened the decision to driving a stake through the heart of the community. When Birdsboro's mayor tried to make a statement at the meeting, the board cut him off and police escorted him from the room.

Daniel Boone's action reinforces my gratitude that the Pottstown School District never merged with Pottsgrove, as originally planned in the 1960s when Pennsylvania consolidated 2,500 school districts to 500.

If we had joined Pottsgrove, we would surely have lost our neighborhood schools by now, and Pottstown would be a secondary consideration in the operations of the district.

Fortunately, because the Pottstown School District and the borough have the same boundaries and serve the same people, it's much easier to think holistically and cooperate to improve everyone's quality of life.

**Sprawling development**

Daniel Boone, which comprises Birdsboro, Union, and Amity townships, is a textbook example of sprawl: a low density lifestyle that randomly scatters houses, stores and workplaces across the landscape, requiring people to drive for every activity.

For decades, all across Pennsylvania, consolidated districts like Daniel Boone have closed hundreds of neighborhood schools and replaced them with big schools in the middle of nowhere, spawning even more car-dependent development and draining the life from established older communities like Birdsboro.

**Walkable communities**

Yet in a world of seven billion people, consuming ever more of the earth's resources and generating more greenhouse gases than ever before, walkable towns like Birdsboro — and Pottstown — are the only sustainable form of development going forward.

**Sustainable development**

In fact, a recent report by the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate states that using land more efficiently and limiting suburban sprawl are two of the most important ways to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

**Silo thinking**

Unfortunately, Daniel Boone is only thinking of its narrow self interest and the health of Birdsboro doesn't count.

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Daniel Boone proposes to close the Birdsboro Elementary School, undermining the vitality of the borough and eliminating the district's only walkable neighborhood elementary school.