

Colby Barrett:

Thank you for inviting us here today. My name is Colby Barrett and I am from Burke Town School and I am so excited to talk to you about some pros and cons of our school and our community.

Burke Town School is important to my community because it allows us to enter a safe learning place, and it offers both academic and emotional support to the students. Every day in the homeroom our teachers provide time and activities to learn how to become members of a community, and bond with each other.

My school also offers unique programs like ropes courses at nearby Siskin Coutts, and Kingdom Sense of Place, where all students choose activities like swimming, golfing, mountain biking, and visiting farms. Every week throughout the winter our school gives us the opportunity to either downhill ski, ice skate, or snowshoe.

However, because of low staffing, low financial resources, and low population, I feel like we miss out on some opportunities compared to bigger towns. Unfortunately, our classmates couldn't be here as planned due to a bus driver staffing shortage.

We need a new gym because it is so small. The trailers that we use for classes were supposed to be temporary 25 years ago, but they are still in use and they are so tiny, hot, moldy, and infested with rodents.

I believe that community members should pass the school budget because that creates more opportunities and paths for students. It means we'll be better prepared for high school.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Owen Tyburski:

Hello, my name is Owen Tyburski and I would like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to testify about my views on my school and education in Vermont.

I am currently in 8th grade at Burke Town School. I am part of the Student Council, the Robotics Team, and the Odyssey of the Mind program.

I would like to talk about what I think is going well in my school and what needs improvement to make it a better educational environment.

Our school is in such a rural place, so there is more outdoor space to enjoy and explore. But, because of this space, people live so far apart that connecting outside of school can be difficult.

Many parts of our school's campus are very nice. We have bike trails, a soccer field, a pavilion, and a softball field. But I think that some of the buildings could be improved. Both the gym and the cafeteria are quite small, and very old. The acoustics in the gym are terrible and whenever we host any sort of activity, like the ski swap, or dances, or our all-school assembly, it gets hot and loud and uncomfortable.

Our school is very important to our community because it brings people together for large events. For example, the annual ski swap provides people more affordable opportunities to participate in skiing and snowboarding. The ski swap also generates thousands of dollars every year for the Parent Teacher Organization, which funds programs that our school can't provide.

There are many field trips and activities that we do throughout the year. Last year our school started experiential learning. Once a week we would leave school around lunch and go to our chosen experience: either mountain biking, playing musical instruments, or fishing. I found this to be a very fun way to get out of the classroom and do enriching activities with the community. Our school's after-school program helps fund some of the activities that I do. The Robotics Team and the Odyssey of the Mind program promote growth in teamwork and problem solving skills.

I think that passing the school budget each year is very important because it funds the materials and other programs we need. But I realize that it can be financially difficult for community members, because whenever the budget is raised, taxes are increased.

Thank you all again for giving me the opportunity to testify about my school and Vermont's education.

Lenore Steen (Alternate):

Good afternoon, everyone. I am so honored to be here today. I am Lenore Steen, and I go to Burke Town School. My school has been a welcoming community with great educational opportunities, as well as a positive learning environment.

During my time at Burke, I have had a fun-filled educational adventure, learning while hiking, presenting, and more. The inclusive and kind space at Burke makes me so grateful to be in a generous, healthy environment. I appreciate my school and educators more and more every day.

Burke Town School is important to my community because it brings people of all ages together at fundraising events. While the legendary Burke ski swap brings affordable equipment to our whole community, other events like bingo night and our dances help bring out both our older and younger community members.

My school's rural location is one of its biggest assets. We don't have to travel far to get to great hiking trails and have outdoor adventures. We also have access to cross country skis and snowshoes, we do outdoor team building exercises, and our campus has a nice large outdoor play area for recess and physical education.

I believe that it is important for voters to pass the school budget. It helps fund our educational resources such as laptops, math books, pencils, and folders. If our school is funded well, the quality of our cafeteria food can be healthier. A good budget can help hire more bus drivers. It would have been really great to be able to have our whole class with us today, but sadly we have a shortage of bus drivers.

An important infrastructure need for Burke Town School is a full-sized gym. PE could offer more games; for example, volleyball would be more enjoyable with a bigger playing space. Our gym is the largest room in our school and it can not hold the whole community for an event as it is. Another important infrastructure need my school has is a larger art room. Our current art space is very crowded. Having a bigger space would make a positive impact on every student in the school. The needs consist of adding natural light, providing more working space, building more storage for artwork in progress, and more art materials.

Thank you for having me and I am excited to have been able to share my perspective with all of you. I appreciate your support of our Northeast Kingdom community. Your service is greatly noticed in Burke, and we are all grateful to have it.