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An exciting time to be living in Dalton

Dalton is a remarkable place with a bright future, if we work together.

Our shared commitment to this basic idea has opened the door to partnership discussions involving future opportunities for Dalton Public Schools and the educational pathways of our Dalton community.

DPS continues to seek a facilities solution to keep up with growing capacity and ensure it remains on the cutting edge of educational excellence and student success. Past discussions on this topic have broken down, based on real and understandable questions about how school spending fits into our overall economic picture. When the last process was paused, it gave us all a chance for a needed deep breath and reflection. It also clarified that doing nothing is not an option.

As DPS held a series of stakeholder discussions to evaluate a path forward, it became evident that the school system was not the only group evaluating how they address specific needs and priorities in a way that best meets our shared community needs. With our local college, business groups, civic organizations and political leadership all in the midst of various strategic plans, visioning and capital campaign planning, this is an exciting time in Dalton.

Over the past year, our organizations have continued informal discussions to ensure that our individual planning efforts are not happening in a vacuum. These discussions have taken many forms, including two joint school board and City Council meetings hosted at Dalton State College, a visit to TechTown in Chattanooga and plenty of informal discussions over coffee, at church, in classrooms and in board rooms.

These discussions have not led to a specific plan or proposal. Such proposal would require and benefit from much more community engagement. But it has reaffirmed our commitment that the best path forward, for Dalton, is a shared one.

We look forward to exploring what is possible, together.

*Jim Hawkins, superintendent, Dalton Public Schools*

*Rick Fromm, chair, Dalton Board of Education*

*Margaret Venable, president, Dalton State College*

*Mayor Dennis Mock, city of Dalton*

*Rob Bradham, president & CEO, Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce*