

The April 21st Facilities Meeting was primarily about the defeated budget and the December, 2008 school referendum. The only things reported about the proposed new school were these points:

1. soil test were done and the soil is good
2. boring test needs to be done to determine if the ground can sustain the weight of a two story building
3. sewer capacity needs to be investigated to determine what is needed and if it can be expanded in the future
4. wetland buffer must be investigated to determine proximity of building to the wetlands
5. an architects rendition was shown with a floor plan (not necessarily the final rendition)
6. proposed school would house 750 students
7. an advantage is the school district already owns the land
8. the school will be designed so that it can be expanded later

At the beginning of the meeting, Dr. Foster asked why the budget was voted down. Since about 80 to 85% of the group present consisted of faculty members, they felt “apathy” was the major reason. Too few voters got out to vote. One faculty member reported that the project to give students a mock election experience resulted in parents bringing students to the voting station but the parents did not vote. Only their children voted.

I, Walter Dabrowski, reported that my discussions with friends and neighbors showed that many people still think there is a lot of fat in the budget and that the hiring of administrators was controversial. In addition, there is the state of the economy with foreclosures, inflation, prior high school tax levy, etc.

Joe Armenti, elected board candidate, echoed my words about the economy and repeated the economy is bad.

Mike Caputo, a parent, stated that pre-kindergarten parents are out of the loop.

John Ruch, school board candidate, stated they needed to make a stronger case for the budget. He also pointed out that a population has a number of foreigners who are not registered voters.

At this point, the discussion went on a tangent. Mr. Caputo said they needed to reach out to pre-school kids and their parents. Dr. Foster said in two years pre-school will be a requirement under the No Child Left Behind Law. The target population will be "at-risk students" and literature will be the targeted skill area. Sharon DeVito, elected board candidate, asked a series of questions about what measurements will be used, what projections will be made, what will class size be, etc. Dr. Foster said she is going to get additional information about the program and provide it at a later date. Mr. Caputo finished the discussion by saying that parents will pay for the pre-school education.

Mr. Armenti turned the discussion into a new path. He said flat-out that “the community will not approve a new school.” In the ensuing discussion, one of the teachers said something about threatening the public by cutting a program. Mr. Ruch responded that the growth rates are not high so they cannot threaten the voters. Some of the people present claimed an informal survey showed there was a high growth rate.

I stated there was a concern over having elementary guidance counselors. Mr. Caputo said he didn’t understand why they were needed at the elementary level. He understood why they were at the middle and high school levels, but not the elementary level.

Both elementary guidance counselors and teachers responded that times have changed. One cited the case in the South where 3rd graders plotted murdering their teacher. Another claimed she had a student who cried every day until the guidance counselor taught the child coping skills to deal with situation. Other stories were related to demonstrate how the elementary counselors worked.

Mr. Ruch went back to the proposal of a new school. He said he was not sure a new school was needed. Every year you can save costs, he stated.

Mr. Armenti cited statistics about what the state was looking for to justify having a school. Mr. Gizzo, Principal of the Pond Road School, said his figures that day showed the school has 1042 students. The buildings capacity is only for 1000 students. Mrs. DeVito added that every demographic study projecting student enrollment has been wrong. Mr Ruch's retort was that the shortage of three classes doesn't require a 30 class room school. The discussion trailed off into trailers vs classrooms.

The next meeting will be May 27th. The public is invited to participate in these meetings so all are welcomed.

THE PUBLIC MUST RECOGNIZE THAT EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE TO MAKE THESE NOTES AS ACCURATE AS POSSIBLE. THEY ARE ALSO NOT COMPLETE BUT THEY DO PROVIDE THE ESSENCE OF WHAT WAS DISCUSSED AND THE ISSUES THAT WERE RAISED.