

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS PROJECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes - Wednesday, October 1, 2008

Present were Mrs. Julia Wilson, Mr. Dennis Wausnock, and committee Co-chair, Mrs. Michele Pargeon. Also present was Mr. David Krem, Superintendent of Schools. The meeting began at 7 :05 pm.

We opened up discussion on the findings and numbers distributed at the September 18th, 2008 meeting of the Board Crabtree and Rohrbach.

We also went over the number of classrooms we currently have (97) and the number of classrooms needed for capacity (110).

We also discussed how consolidating five schools to three would help to eliminate the number of classrooms needed for special education could be reduced with the district's goal to create the least restrictive environment for our students.

We also discussed the costs for Special Education expected for this year (\$ 9,655,241) against the state burden of (\$ 1,838,666), and the cost of regular education (\$ 16,444,134) against the state subsidization of \$ 9,038,400.

The total cost allotted from this year's budget for the combined costs of gasoline, oil, and electricity is \$ 1,275,575.

We also discussed the need to have LEED certified buildings. Geothermal systems utilizing the existing water supply would be beneficial in the long run, with rising oil and gas prices. Discussion also was included concerning underground cisterns and the alternative of drilling and the costs involved.

While we all agreed we were anxious to hear the tax figures from the business office associated with the architect's figures, we also talked about the amount of money we are expected to pay towards the debt payment this year, \$ 1,505,226.

When discussion came about what three schools we would keep, some concern was raised about there being a high cancer rate in the Barth Elementary school part of Pottstown. We agreed the entire area would be at a higher risk of cancer just due to the proximity of 2 major highways with lots of traffic.

We then discussed the jump in numbers with Barth's attendance, which was at 410 students. This was obviously due to the much needed classroom space that opened up with the modular units receiving their certificates of occupancy, and the help of volunteers who painted and landscaped their way through a Day Of Caring.

We compared Barth's 410 students, physical square footage, and acreage available for renovations and additions versus Rupert's 275 students, square footage, and acreage.

Busing was also brought up. Many children are being bussed anyway, and the numbers would not increase or decrease so much to an extent that busing should not be a major contributing factor to the board in their decision.

However, the costs involved with building renovations of entire electrical, plumbing, Heating and cooling, asbestos removal, doors, windows, roofing material lighting, safety and security, sprinkler systems, ADA approved, storage rooms classroom updates, etc. multiplied by 3 of 5 would definitely be a contributing factor in a decision.

Boundary lines could be easily changed to accommodate more downtown children to attend Lincoln and Franklin Schools. Therefore Children who fall outside the mile line from Lincoln or Franklin, or who would be crossing a dangerous highway such as High Street, would be bussed to Barth Elementary. Barth currently has 150 students who walk. They have the existing capacity, and they have the acreage. Although Rupert may have more walkers, their existing classroom space, and property space make it prohibitive to building a school that would meet the districts enrollment projections and goal for reduced class sizes, without further increasing the number of classrooms needed at Lincoln or Franklin Elementary schools.

Parents who drive their children to school and pick them up have been an increasing threat to the children's safety, as many drivers have been parking their cars in the no parking zones and having their children cross the street without the use of a crosswalk, or utilizing the safeties. There was also some discussion regarding car lines and bus lines.

We also discussed the possibilities associated with the Early Learning wings, and building in Learning Labs instead of hallways for maximum reimbursement.

When we touched upon the number of apartment buildings in Pottstown, and how that landlord is paying the taxes only for the property,

you compare the amount of revenue received from that property against the cost to educate a regular education child, and then you multiply the number of the children in that property which could easily be five or more, depending on the number of apartments. Then the average taxpayer/homeowner is left footing the bill. We talked about how having a 55 + adult community, no children, would benefit the tax base. Once we started talking about the businesses moving out, we agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:05.