

Bond shift dead

Chairmen of schools, county set deal in motion to boost CMS access to construction dollars

Joe White and Tom Cox sprung a \$25 million surprise Wednesday, announcing they had agreed that CMS should scuttle a proposed reallocation of school renovation and construction dollars that has threatened to shatter public trust in the school board.

Next Tuesday's scheduled vote on the controversial reallocations may instead become a vote on a tightly worded resolution that will end most of the reallocation talk, but ask commissioners for \$25 million in new money.

The effect would be to allow school board members to deliver renovations promised in previous bond referendums to more than a dozen school communities, and

also proceed with new construction in areas of the county where overcrowding is most acute.

Commissioners Chairman Cox said there was no viable choice on the reallocations.

"If you're concerned about the long term you've got to get past this issue. Either way you go it's not good."

At hearings held by the Bond Oversight Committee, citizens complained that reallocation pitted parents against one another, when all of them were at schools that had documented needs.

Wednesday evening, White said he and Cox believed the money would be certificates of participation, which do not require voter



Tom Cox: "We're only talking about \$25 million... That's a doable thing. We've got to look for the long term."

approval. The \$25 million would be "specific new money and would not be held against us in the future," meaning it would be on top of what commissioners have already agreed to provide, and

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Board member's notebook

Conditions detailed at 'design-only' schools

In a "Dear Board Members" letter, District 4 school board member Louise Woods reports on visits she made last week to six schools caught up in the study to reallocate bond money.

The letter details conditions at the schools where about \$5 million could be shifted away from renovation design work.

As a report on Wednesday's school board above notes, the board on Tuesday may abandon most of the reallocation proposals in favor of asking county commissioners for about \$25 million in new dollars.

Such a deal would keep promised bond projects on schedule, and also build new seats in areas

where schools are overcrowded.

The Woods notes present a detailed look inside some of the affected public facilities, written from the point of view of how well they allow teachers and students go about their work. It also makes clear some of the public reaction to the reallocation plan, and fears at affected schools that lost funds might never be regained.

The names of individuals that Woods identified in her original letter have been removed from this edited version.

By LOUISE WOODS

I spent the day visiting "Design Only" schools, and I'm very glad I did. I learned much useful information which I felt might interest

you. Since most were unable to attend, I am sharing this with you, as I promised the SLTs [School Leadership Teams] I would. Thanks! to Kit for coming to Garinger. It meant so much to them to have you there. Also, I'm sending the information to staff and hope it will be useful...

Cochrane Middle

Condition of school:

- Serious mold issues, causing teacher and student absenteeism and illness, making medication necessary for many (and poor insurance to cover, they said!)
- A classroom, which floods when it rains.

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Design-only schools

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– Sewage that has backed up several times this year, creating intolerable conditions.

– Science facilities in sixth- and seventh-grade classrooms seriously inadequate for science experiments, with limited water and electrical access. Appearance: poor!

– Small media center with inadequate computers for research.

– Outdated, rundown building inside and out for sixth- and seventh-graders.

Reaction:

Teachers spend much time just cleaning out mold, etc. Five experienced teachers leaving at year's end to go to newer schools. Likely replaced with new ones.

Parents, including those who chose science magnet, say facilities inadequate and not magnet they were promised.

Bad facilities enhance poor image at time school is trying to overcome it.

Parents in surrounding neighborhoods don't want to come, partly because of poor facilities compared to new schools nearby. Most active parents at feeder schools choose to go elsewhere, so

lose "critical mass of energy" and support to other schools.

Parents would be attracted to small size and attentive staff; however, facility turns them off before they give Cochrane a chance.

One parent brought child from feeder pattern at Oaklawn, but said other parents would not be attracted from there because of facilities inadequate to deliver adequate science instruction at middle school level.

Parents and staff believe taking design money would cause delay and have no faith that money would return to Cochrane in a timely fashion. They believe it would undermine trust and their ability to promote future bonds. One parent said it was like throwing them a bone to get their support for bonds and then taking it away.

Quote from [teacher]: Based on the mold situation a lot of our experienced teachers are leaving because of allergy problems and health issues. Our students with asthma and allergies are having health problems.

From [teacher and parent]: She is concerned about safety for microscope use. Teacher is hesitant in setting up labs due to elec-

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Your views, please

Next Tuesday, the school board may reject reallocation of bond money and seek more dollars from county commissioners. After pondering next Tuesday's debate and the decision, e-mail us your views – on that decision, on where our community stands in relation to quality schools for all children, and on how the school board should proceed.

E-mail your comments to swannfello@aol.com by 10 p.m. Wednesday, June 9, for use in the school year's last regular edition of *Educate!*

Distribution of the edition may be delayed from Thursday to Friday. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Educate! is a journal on public education focusing on Charlotte-Mecklenburg and N.C. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen.

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People: Leonard R. (Deacon) Jones, president; Lucy Bush Carter, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director and *Educate!* editor; Beth Kinny, outreach director. Assisting with this edition: Stephanie Southworth.

Civil tone at school board hearings is encouraging

I found a good part of your report regarding last week's bond allocation hearing to be very fair and even-handed. I truly believe this community is best served by dealing with this issue in a non-inflammatory manner. There are good points to be made on both sides.

I did find your characterization of the audience's politeness as "quaint" a bit puzzling. Shouldn't we all be striving for civil public engagement? I frankly was very surprised when we first came to Charlotte at how strident school board hearings often became. This stridency seemed to be encouraged by the media (who loved dividing us into camps), by certain members of the school board, and by local activist groups. I don't think our school system has been well served by this. The speakers I found most credible at last week's hearings were not the ones speaking of selfishness and of relegating children to ghettos, but rather those who were willing to thoughtfully examine both sides of the issue.

I actually think this is a very encouraging time for our school system and our community. People throughout the city are paying attention to this issue and, for the most part, refraining from divisive rhetoric. Anyone who is truly interested in educating all of our children should be encouraging, not discouraging, this civil debate.

Sharon Starks

From
Readers



FISH FRY

This Saturday, June 5

10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Rain or Shine

1600 block West Trade Street

Park & Shop lot next to Family Dollar Store

Charlotte USA

Plates: \$6

Croaker or Whiting, 2 Sides, Bread, Soda

prepared for you by

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publisher of Educate!, this community journal on public education

To donate on the occasion of this fund-raiser, call 704-342-4330 or log on to www.networkforgood.org and use keyword Swann Fellowship. Thanks!

Resegregation puts area's economy at risk

'Integration by income level'

An excerpt from State of the South 2004 report:

'In the absence of court orders requiring racial desegregation, a few Southern school districts have shifted toward a policy of using family income as a factor in student assignments. This is a significant shift and one that holds promise for children from poor and near-poor families.

'Substantial evidence shows that students from low-income families score higher on tests when they go to school with students from more affluent families. Middle-income students do worse than their peers when they go to high-poverty schools. Thus, it is imperative that Southern states and communities eliminate schools with high concentrations of students from poor families.

"Gary Orfield, director of the Harvard [Civil Rights] project, summarizes the general rule: 'What I tell parents is that it's not magic to sit next to a white kid, but to be in a middle class school rather than a poverty school makes a huge difference.'

"Some high-poverty schools, of course, manage to produce academically high-performing graduates. Such schools require extraordinary educational leadership and professional support beyond that available to most schools in distressed areas. As inspirational as these schools are, the South cannot – and should not – count on extraordinary bursts of courage and energy as a basis for education policy.

"When it was a region divided legally by race, the South suffered from its fractured society, tarnished image, and sluggish economy. Today, Southerners must recognize the consequences of endemic isolation and a divided society as a threat to their self-interest.

"Despite the region's progress over the last quarter of a century, its communities will suffer anew if they allow children to grow up and go to school isolated by race and income.

"The racial and income composition of schools matters – for individual students, for civic health, and for the South's economic advancement. And it matters because of the core American ideals of equity and justice.

"When schools isolate children by income, disadvantaged students are at risk because high-poverty schools almost always provide less-than-adequate education. When it comes to income, separate invariably means inferior. The consequence of high-poverty schools is a large population of undereducated youth and adults and a society more rigidly divided into rich and poor, which in turn threatens the region's economic future and civic health.

"Racial isolation also poses a threat to the South's future. Despite the truth of Gary Orfield's statement that 'it's not magic to sit next to a white kid,' public schools have an important role to play in teaching children to interact positively with others from diverse backgrounds. Racially integrated schools have value for all students, regardless of income or ethnicity. The ability to live and work with people who are different from oneself is essential in our increasingly multi-ethnic society and global economy."

– "State of the South 2004: Fifty Years After Brown v. Board of Education" is published by MDC Inc., a nonprofit organization established in Chapel Hill in 1967 to help North Carolina make the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and from a segregated to an integrated workforce. The report may be downloaded from www.mdcinc.org/sospublic.htm

Issue explored in report on 'State of the South'

Charlotte-Mecklenburg buried Jim Crow, made desegregation work and planted the seeds of a diverse, welcoming culture. Its rewards were wealth and prominence.

But one longtime observer of Southern communities says those rewards are now at risk as the community resegregates its schools.

"Mecklenburg County for a long time has had justified pride in itself in building upon the Swann decision," Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life, said Tuesday. Guillory and others authored "State of the South 2004: Fifty Years After Brown v. Board of Education," published by Chapel Hill-based MDC Inc.



Guillory

"For a good two decades Charlotte-Mecklenburg was a model for civil engagement and civic leadership... an example of a progressive-business-government-neighborhood coalition that said, we will take Swann and make it work. And they did."

Indeed, said Guillory, "it's hard to imagine Charlotte as a modern banking leader and the vibrant community it is without the community having made Swann work." It developed a reputation that it was a community that "manages and succeeds with change – not totally, but that it works its way through.... Not that there wasn't some resistance, and some mistakes made along the way and challenges still to be overcome."

"We've learned in the South that our liberation from Jim Crow actually liberated us economically

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Resegregation puts economy at risk

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as well as socially. Charlotte stands as Exhibit A....”

Growth has brought newcomers, Guillory noted. “Many have moved in. They don’t remember. They weren’t part of the struggle – or part of the success. Newcomer parents are “asking, very legitimately, what’s best for my kid.”

“But what we’ve learned in the South is that public schooling is a private good, but it’s not only a private good, in that it is important for school authorities, school boards and community leaders to work their way to a system that allows lower-income kids to go to school with middle-income kids and that way raise the whole community’s education level.”

The educations of all children assigned to high-poverty schools will suffer. “Not only that, the whole community is going to suffer... It’s not just what you want individually. It’s what the community needs to keep the community healthy.”

Parents need to give school boards “some flexibility” to create assignment plans “that reflect the need of the whole community to broaden the educational base and lift more young adolescents to a higher level of achievement. That’s what has gotten lost in Charlotte and other communities that have resegregated.”

“The cautionary tale is if you don’t attend to not only racial but economic diversity in your school system, you can very easily lose your economic momentum.”

For Guillory, it is too early in the history of resegregation to find a formula for what helps communities recapture lost diversity once they had lost it. But he does have his own ideas about what a community like Charlotte-Mecklenburg will require:

“We need some leaders.... Sometimes you just have to have civic and political and community

Recommendations

An excerpt from State of the South 2004 report, with portion of report’s commentary on recommendation 4:

“We urge regional, state, and local leaders to consider five overarching goals. The first three relate in particular to the transformation of high schools because they provide the last opportunity of compulsory public education. The last two speak to public education more broadly.

- 1** “Ensure that all young people graduate from high school prepared for further education.
- 2** “Give students multiple pathways through and out of high schools – more options and equitable options.
- 3** “Build stronger connections between adults and adolescents, between schools and communities.
- 4** “Eliminate high-poverty schools to bring an end to ethnic and social class isolation.

“Local school districts should ensure that no schools have a high concentration of students living in poverty.

“Educated people refuse to be poor, George Autry, MDC’s founding president, used to say. But schools that contain a heavy concentration of young people from low-income families can stifle the education that would release them from poverty.

“Unless the South moves as swiftly as possible to eliminate high-poverty schools, inequality will remain the heart of the matter in education. Arthur Levine, president of Teachers College, Columbia University, describes the nation, as well as the South, as having ‘a system of separate and unequal education’ – not created by legal design but by the accumulation of innumerable choices made by communities and their residents.

“‘Inequality of education,’ he says, is ‘the most serious civil rights issue in America today.’

“The South has many countywide school districts that serve a mixed-income population and can – given public will and leadership – devise student assignment plans to avoid creating schools with high concentrations of students in poverty. The family-income-based assignment policy adopted in Wake County, North Carolina, may offer a model for other metropolitan areas in the South. Wake is a thriving, fast-growing county, and its education officials see high-achieving public schools as a critical component of sustaining a high quality of life.”

- 5** “Develop a corps of superbly trained, well-paid, professional teachers.”

– “State of the South 2004: Fifty Years After Brown v. Board of Education” is published by MDC Inc., a nonprofit organization established in Chapel Hill in 1967 to help North Carolina make the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and from a segregated to an integrated workforce. The report may be downloaded from www.mdcinc.org/sospublic.htm

leadership strong enough, self-assured enough... who will redefining issues, who will step out, who know this is too important for our economy and for our future.”

MDC Inc. has tentatively agreed to hold a forum in

Charlotte at a later date about its State of the South report.

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The full State of the South 2004 report may be downloaded at www.mdcinc.org/sospublic.htm

Design-only schools

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trical outlets. Teacher has to use extension cords and power strips, which carry a potential safety hazard. I am a firm believer in hands-on activities. We have the technology, but the classroom is not capable to handle the electricity needed. We need a lab with running water.

From [parent]: Considering transferring schools due to the indoor air quality (mold). "My son has missed excessive days from school from being sick related to the mold exposure. He has asthma, which had been very controllable in the past 4 years; however, it has been exacerbated since attending Cochrane Middle....

From [parent]: This is a math-science magnet school which does not have the necessary equipment and tools conducive to effective learning as it relates to science. There is nothing on the campus that enhances a student's learning in science.

From [parent]: My son was an exceptional child with an IEP [Individual Education Plan] in previous years. I chose this school based on his interest in math and science and the size of the school. However, the facilities are not available at Cochrane to capture his attention. He often says, I wish we had gone on the Eastway. Eastway Middle was continuation for him from Winding Springs. Our neighbor's daughter continued to Eastway and frequently expresses her excitement of the school and she, a student that doesn't really like science, is really loving science now because of the resources and things they can do. Eastway is a magnet in global economics and leadership yet they have better resources and facilities conducive to learning science – and Cochrane does not! [During renovation, Eastway is housed at brand-new Lambeth Drive middle school building.]

Questions for staff:

Although I know we have tried to work on mold issue, is there

More states paying for school buildings

A 1930s Depression solution to the bankruptcy of most N.C. school districts still, for the most part, holds sway: The state pays the big bills (salaries and textbooks) and school districts pay for buildings.

But the Leandro school finance adequacy case could shelve those old agreements. If the state is under constitutional obligation to assure that every child – whether in a wealthy county or a poor one – have access to a "sound basic" education, what are the implications for how North Carolina pays for its school buildings? A recent issue of Access Quarterly sums up recent court decisions in this area:

"Though often overlooked, court rulings have, in recent years, been a major factor in increasing state funding for school facilities. Courts in Alaska, Arizona, New Jersey, Ohio, Wyoming, and elsewhere have expressly determined that adequate facilities are an important component of the state's constitutional responsibility.

"Subsequent to litigation, some of these states were able to establish comprehensive facilities standards, conduct statewide assessments to determine if their schools met the defined level of adequate facilities, and put into place mechanisms for increasing capital funding where facilities were found to be inadequate.

"In Ohio, litigation helped get construction spending underway, focused especially on low-wealth and high-need rural and urban districts, even though state funding has been limited. In New Jersey, court rulings have helped localities obtain state funding for new construction and renovation.

"Today, more than 40 states provide some ongoing facilities funding, with most states prioritizing funding toward districts with less ability to pay."

– *The Campaign for Fiscal Equity is a New York-based nonprofit advocacy organization. www.schoolfunding.info*

not something else we can do now? What about deplorable lab furniture? Other schools I've visited today seem to have new or reasonably good furniture, one school getting it from the warehouse. Any plans for Cochrane while waiting?

Our original commitment to "Design Only" schools, when we were selling the bonds, was that we would design before the next bond (projected now at 2005) and then start work immediately. What would be the projected date to begin, and date to complete the work should we take away design money from Cochrane?

Garinger High

Condition of school:

– Science wing was scheduled to be built in this phase. Presently, there are only two chemistry rooms that are adequate, with

plenty of outlets, sinks, and appropriate fume hood. The other six are inadequate. None of the other six rooms have science lab tables. One teacher is teaching biology in a Home Economics room and the counters have big cabinets over them, making labs impossible there. The other four rooms have only one sink and with classes of 28-32, that makes it extremely difficult to do labs. Three of the rooms have only two usable outlets, so only four microscopes can be used at a time. This makes managing 28-32 students difficult. One of the rooms has eight outlets – but only one sink.

– Concern expressed that the newly built stadium is not comparable to others recently built, without facilities such as ticket booths and bathrooms for visitors. The storage room was never

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Cox details proposal

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would not be deducted from any future request for bonds.

It was not clear, however, whether the issuance of the new COPs would delay the sale of other school bonds – and delay the renovation or construction projects to be funded.

White said the plan had been hatched in the last few days and was built on Cox's view that keeping the public's trust requires that the school board must be given the funds to finish projects promised to voters in earlier bond referendums, even if that means selling more bonds than commissioners would prefer.

Tuesday's plan will be very specific, White said, and will outline those projects, like Marie G. Davis Middle, where there is wide agreement that smaller renovation or replacement projects are now appropriate.

The proposal overshadowed the reason for Wednesday's workshop, which was a discussion of Cox's offer of \$3 million if the schools create a believable plan to double test scores at West Charlotte High.

Cox said the plan could be amended to include two schools. He said renaming the school was not in his plan, and that turning the school into a charter school as he had proposed might not be a good idea. As a charter, West Charlotte's low scores wouldn't be counted in CMS's test averages.

Dozens of West Charlotte graduates attended the workshop.

Supt. Jim Pughsley is expected to make a recommendation on Cox's plan Tuesday.

As school board member George Dunlap pointed out, Cox's presentation was a clear admission that Charlotte-Mecklenburg has failed to adequately fund its schools.

Indeed, Cox first quipped that he settled on the \$3 million figure because he was a fan of Dale Earnhardt, who drove the No. 3 race car.

But at the end of his appear-

Calendar

8 School board meets, may settle whether to reallocate bond money, 6 p.m. Board Room, Education Center, 701 E. 2nd St.

10 "Through the Eyes of the Law," a day of panel discussions on the legal history and impact of Brown vs. Board. Museum of the New South, 8:15 a.m.-5 p.m., free to museum members; \$15 for nonmembers; \$35 lunch for all. Lunch keynoter: UNC law dean Gene Nichol.

Reservations: 704-333-1887 ext. 222 or email kbrewster@museumofthenewsouth.org.

13 Day of the African Child, family event and reception, 3 p.m., African-American Cultural Center, 401 N. Myers St.

Sponsors: The Links, Incorporated, Urban League of the Central Carolinas.

ance, he explained that he took Pughsley's \$19 million estimate of what it would take to stabilize all CMS high schools, divided by the seven high schools that are most at risk, and rounded up to the next million.

Education Budget Advisory Committee member Howard Haworth, who appeared with Cox, returned to the same \$19 million number. If Cox's \$3 million offer is accepted, how will the school board justify itself when it "picks one-fifth of the kids, all of whom have a similar need?"

Cox's proposal has overshadowed Pughsley's own proposal for a ninth-grade academy designed to bring all new high school students to grade level by the end of their first year.

Wednesday's meeting saw a return of the personal attacks, disorder and rudeness that in the past have also been a factor in public disenchantment with the school board. White acknowledged during the session that he had lost control, as board members one after the other used question time to make statements.

Briefly...

Easy road: Graduation rates are declining, but more teens are choosing to take GEDs, the New York Times reported. The GED test was initially established to help World War II veterans complete high school work quickly. Today, teens are bypassing tough high school exams and using the GED as a ticket to employment.

www.nytimes.com

Cheating: A study by Rutgers University found that 50% of high school students used the Internet to plagiarize written assignments, the Sacramento Bee reported.

Students blame peer acceptance, Internet ease, time crunches and pressure to get good grades.

www.sacbee.com

Common tests: New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont are banding together to create common end-of-grade tests for grades 3-8, Education Week reported. The states believe they can construct better tests and spend less money acting together.

www.edweek.org

Measuring progress: President Bush's desire to use NAEP as a national measure of all twelfth-graders' reading and math skills can't be supported by the test, Education Week reported. The National Assessment of Educational Progress involves a sample of students, not all students, and individual scores are not returned to students.

www.edweek.org

High school success: Incorporating native teachings, traditions and language classes has enabled Hopi High School in Keams Canyon, Ariz., to graduate 87% of their mostly Native America high school students, the Arizona Republic reported. Despite most of the students being poor, and many riding 80 miles to school, the school surpasses many in the state.

www.azcentral.com

Design-only schools

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replaced. The PA system is poor and was not replaced. The field house is without heat.

The track is obsolete, and since it can't be used for meets, it cuts out opportunities for revenue that other schools have.

In the general building, there is not a computer in every teacher's classroom. The facilities for the fundamental technology class are inadequate. There are computers in several places with nothing to connect to. It is difficult to operate computer without printer.

The updated part of the building is beautiful; however, there are still facility issues, which impede learning and create hardships for teachers.

Reaction:

Staff feels generally that when they visit other schools and return to Garinger, their facility doesn't give their children the same opportunities as in other places, and this bothers them.

They say people have lost faith in the system, and we need to renew their faith. One teacher said that once a commitment is made, it needs to be followed through.

Quote from teacher: After having taught for 27 years, it really hurts me when students come in my classroom, and I don't have the facilities to carry out [N.C.] Standard Course of Study.

More than shooting us in the foot, it's cutting us off at the knees. We have computers with Internet capabilities, but nothing to connect them to. I see it in other schools. It would be nice to have that too on a consistent basis. By putting money elsewhere, you're saying we're not as important as others. How can we compete in our zone?

Questions for staff:

What can we do about providing science tables for Garinger and other schools that need them even now?

Why wasn't Garinger's stadium work completed, with adequate

Communicating in a post-No Child world

One of 11 messages and conclusion about the challenges of reaching the public on school achievement issues, by Virginia communications consultant Adam Kernan-Schloss, in School Administrator:

“Think long term. The goal of educating all children to higher standards is here to stay. Yes, after this year's presidential elections, Congress may well modify some of the law's particulars. But elected officials are not going to compromise on the underlying purpose of NCLB or on holding school leaders accountable....

“Standards-based reform didn't begin with George W. Bush and the Republicans. In fact, much of the early pressure came from Democratic governors from the South in the 1980s and early 1990s, including Bill Clinton and Jim Hunt....

“For educational leaders, the communications challenge is huge. The issues are complex, confusing and impossible to explain in a 10-second sound bite. Making matters worse this past year, many districts and states seemed caught by surprise by the AYP announcements and accompanying media coverage. The next year should be better. But don't wait until mid-August to begin communicating about the performance of your local schools. Start now.”

– www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2004_03/kernan-schloss.htm

track, etc.? What are plans to complete this work? How does Garinger's new stadium compare with other new stadiums built in the last five years?

What about the computer situation at Garinger? Shouldn't every teacher have a computer? When can other needs be addressed?

If Garinger is removed as “Design Only,” when could they be assured that their next phase would begin and end?

Alexander Graham Middle

Condition of school:

Tremendously overcrowded! Landlocked, so only one more mobile can be added.

– ESL students: No classroom for ESL students except for an office area in the Media Center, which can hold five students comfortably.

– Classroom in the gym concession area.

– Autistic classroom is a room sectioned off from the old workshop, and needs soundproofing.

– LifeSpan is in a large room.

– Multipurpose room houses an ISS [in-school suspension] class and a drama class. Also, the back part of the multipurpose room has

been made into two classrooms.

There is a partition that separates the two classes and one that separates the two classes from the multipurpose room; therefore, the noise level among classes is a problem.

– (I believe this is the school with) no teacher's lounge.

Reaction:

School Leadership Team wants to make it clear that the situation at AG [Alexander Graham] has become more desperate, not better, as a result of “choice.” Their numbers have increased from 660 to 898, and next year they are supposed to have 926 non-EC and 36 EC children. Since they are landlocked, they cannot add more than one more mobile, so space issues cannot be relieved.

Private school children are coming back; however, they fear they will lose this momentum if this situation is not corrected.

Quote from parent: One of our major concerns at AG is that the reallocation of funds away from our design project (and the other reallocations proposed) will seriously impact the credibility of the School Board and the ability to

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Design-only schools

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approve future bond referendums. If our project is shelved for the purpose of funding another needy project, what assurance do we have that we will be in the next bond proposal and why would we help to advocate in favor of it? If you stick to your guns and uphold your promise, schools will continue to fight for future bonds because they will trust that they will be helped by them. Let the needy schools that are so vocal now advocate for their projects in the next bond referendum. Then it will be sure to pass!

Questions for staff:

Will AG be able to receive the one mobile they can have, to relieve them a little? Is it wise to have so many EC classes in a building that is overcrowded and landlocked? Can they receive help dividing one large classroom into two this summer?... How large will their building be in the new design? Will it be designed for 1,000 or 1,200?

Sedgefield Middle

Condition of school:

Not good! Inadequate office spaces, including no spaces for one-on-one with students. Nurse in with copy machines. Academic facilitators sharing offices and media center.

- Small classrooms.
- No space for teaming. Built as junior high.
- Halls dark and close together.
- No air conditioning in gym. Science and keyboarding rooms inadequate.
- Floating teachers with no offices and nowhere to go and plan.
- Two and a half EC [exceptional children's] teachers in the same classroom.
- Band, chorus, dance all at one time in multi-purpose room.
- Four classrooms with no ventilation and no windows, and classrooms opening from outside, providing safety issue.
- Building maintenance issues

that they cannot fix, such as light fixtures misaligned, asbestos tiles slanted down.

– Can't get cable to older classrooms, so older classrooms can only access Channel 3 but not History Channel, etc. Wired for Internet, but one computer or less per classroom. Pipes hanging out of ceiling.

Reaction:

From staff: We know that with proper equipment, our kids can learn.

Staff talked about extraordinary measures they take to provide extra opportunities for children; however, students feel neglected.

Quote: It just looks so dingy. It used to be the jewel of South End.

Teachers spoke of safety issues as children continually bump into each other because of small classrooms.

Teachers described the challenges of floating teachers, even though there are only 610 students.

A teacher, who is also an elementary parent-to-be from southwest Mecklenburg, said this: We need new schools, but we need to take care of these buildings as well. We must take care of what we have. He indicated that he did not approve of delaying Sedgefield [just to gain] a new school.

Questions for staff:

How is it that Sedgefield shows up under-populated, yet is overcrowded? Are there any of these building deficiencies that can be addressed now?

If design-only money is taken away, when will work begin and end on this project?

Long Creek Elementary

Condition of school:

- Building very old and overcrowded, with spread-out design.
- Concern about impact on education of children. Specials limited because of inadequate space.
- Art, music on a cart. This doesn't work because of uneven terrain outside between buildings and going to mobiles, and side-walks uneven and insufficient. Music teacher recently had shoulder surgery, and these teachers

[push] very heavy carts.

- Inadequate computer access.
- Safety issues, with open campus.
- No place for assemblies that is large enough. Gym has no air conditioning.
- Inadequate restrooms, such as one area with 150 or more students and two one-person bathrooms. No hot water in K-1 rooms.
- Lead and asbestos issues.

Reaction:

Mixed. This group of parents agreed with the speaker who spoke Tuesday [May 25 public hearing on reallocation] saying they would go along with the reprioritization in order to help Highland Creek and Hopewell; however, they said this is predicated on a commitment they believe they have from staff that they will be at the top of the list in the next bond.

They said neither FUME nor the Bond Oversight Committee speaks for them. They have been contacted from both regarding this issue and seem a little skeptical about what they're told. They believe their needs have been overlooked.

They were extremely excited about the design plans and feel their need is great and should be delayed no longer than necessary.

They are concerned about competition with other surrounding schools in a choice environment.

They believe their children's education is suffering because of inadequacy of the building, and this bothers them greatly.

Questions for staff:

How can they be guaranteed immediate attention after the next bond if many other schools are already [in front of] them?

Could they have additional mobiles to prevent art/music, etc. on a cart, since travel between classes is so challenging?

Is there any way their old Ag building [agriculture building, built in 1920s], which has been closed down, can be used again? They believe it could be, and they desperately need space.

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Design-only schools

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Alexander Middle

Condition of school:

– Infrastructure too small for 1,500 to 1,700 students. Lunch from 11:05 a.m. to 2 p.m.

– Older building, but well kept. Rooms appear larger than Sedgfield and Cochrane. The science labs that I saw are larger and better equipped, and have several sinks and outlets and tables as well as desks.

– Serious space issues, with one EC resource class in an old janitor's room. There is inadequate space for the five ESL classrooms. Because of code, mobile units are located far from building, creating safety concerns.

– Mobiles have taken space, so they have lost their soccer and baseball fields. They are unable to have home baseball games.

– Some new rooms [were built] with '97 money.

– The building is supposed to hold 990 students, but now, with 16 mobiles, they hold 1,460. Next year, the projection is 1,542, not including six self-contained classes and five ESL, etc.

Reaction:

At Alexander, I only spoke with the principal and one parent, who was from the Highland Creek area. Norm Gundell from Bond Oversight had spoken with them and recommended that they use design money to help with new construction.

They were agreeable that the new Bailey Road middle school would provide them much-needed relief, and I explained to them that we're already proceeding with it. They also would benefit from seats at Highland Creek and Hopewell.

They were not clear that the design would give them 1,200 seats, as new baseline construction is supposed to do. This would really help them.

Questions for staff:

They already have a basic plan drawn up, which appears to be

quite extensive. How much money was spent, and how much is left?

Will the design and new construction take them to 1,200 capacity?

North Meck High

Condition of school:

Extremely overcrowded, taxing all areas of infrastructure.

– With a capacity of 1,680 without mobiles, they have a capacity of 1,680, 1,500 after EC.

– There is land for expansion and, in fact, we are tearing down more woods now for mobiles.

– Eight science labs appear to be up to standard, other than having strips for outlets; however, that is not enough. While the plan is apparently for teachers to switch [rooms], in fact many students in classes without labs do not get lab instruction.

– Safety issues related to overcrowding, as more students are in close quarters.

Reaction:

Parents on the School Leadership Team apparently did NOT agree with statements made in behalf of the North on Tuesday night.

They asked why are we adding on a 500 (I said that it is 400, as I remember) addition to Hopewell High, which will have no impact on relieving overcrowding at North, the second largest high school in the state.

Quote from leadership team member: With current overcrowding status, some science courses are conducted with NO lab classes due to lack of facilities. It becomes the luck of the draw if a student gets a class with labs or without.

Biology for some is in a regular classroom, with no sinks and no tables.

Quote: North Meck's infrastructure is inadequate NOW to support the student population of 2,400. The current projected growth is 200 to 400 additional students per year. By 2006, our population could be in a range of 3,000 to 3,600 students. Solve the crisis situation by creatively expanding the infrastructure.

Concern that the person who designs a school must be clearly connected to the project through completion, so that this firm is accountable.

No foreign language labs, which puts IB students at a disadvantage when they take IB test.

(There is actually one lab, but it can't be used because of space constraints.)

Mold problems in classrooms.

Questions for staff:

Does the projected design include the 2,000 seats? This was never made clear to the SLT and principal and, in fact, some thought the opposite. (Answer from staff: It does.)

Are we doing all we can to push DOT to make necessary improvements to Alexanderana Road and Hwy. 115?

Why is the Hopewell project being put ahead of North Meck, when the commitment was already made to North and North is the most overcrowded?

Have we considered doing science wings like [those at] West Charlotte? A teacher who teaches at North says this is the most cost-effective way to build them, since the building is structured so that teachers can really share labs?

Could there be classes that start later for students, perhaps even having students who volunteer to come second period, provide their own transportation, and stay a period later (so science labs, etc., could be available)?

Is it true that there are mold problems at Bradley already?

Is it true that North Meck Stadium is \$1 million over budget? Does the designer take any responsibility or is CMS absorbing all the cost? From what fund?

For those who made it this far, thanks for reading....