

Public Hearing Meeting November 18, 2010

A public hearing meeting for the discussion of Mahoning Elementary of the Redbank Valley School Board was held, Thursday, November 18, 2010, at 6:30 P.M. in the Redbank Valley High School Auditorium. The following members were in attendance: Adam Barrett, Dee Bell, Brian Dougherty, Randy Frampton, Tina Kennemuth, Rick Kirkpatrick, Shirley Pastor, Chad Shaffer and Glenn Watson.

The public hearing meeting was called to order by Glenn Watson, President.

Mr. Drzewiecki presented guidelines to the public in addressing the school board with remarks. Mr. Drzewiecki did a PowerPoint presentation on information to the audience on the options and the rationale for re-configuration of the elementary buildings. Mr. Drzewiecki explained that the K-6 model would be hard to maintain because of decreased enrollment and lack of equity in class sizes from building to building. This model would have students moving from year to year in order to equalize classrooms. The K-5 model with 6th grade moving to high school would implement a school within a school format. The separation of the middle high school students to senior high school students would reconfigure the present system. But with dwindling population numbers this could be accomplished in the future. Mr. Drzewiecki explained that the K-2 and 3-6 stepping stones model would ensure equalization in the classrooms and improve educational opportunities for students. It allows greater flexibility for utilizing staff in a grouped learning environment and ensures fiscal responsibility to the district. Mr. Drzewiecki informed the public on the laws and regulations for holding a public hearing for closing a building. Notice must be posted/advertised 15 days prior to a public hearing which was done. After a public hearing is held a waiting period of 90 days must take place before a decision whether to close a building can be made. If a building is to be closed a 60 days notice to employees must be given and notification for approval from PDE be submitted for an August 15th deadline. Mr. Drzewiecki explained the impact on the Redbank Valley budget resulting from a change in configuration with estimated savings between \$500,000 to \$700,000. Mr. Loughner presented estimated transportation cost to the audience with the K-6 and stepping stones models. After state reimbursement the additional cost to the district would be \$10,000 per model and \$6,000 per additional bus if the school board elects to do so. Mr. Long, Mrs. McCauley and Mr. Huffman presented the administration recommendation for stepping stones. Given current student population and the number of classrooms per building moving to grade specific buildings would better address age-specific programming and testing for both primary (K-2) and intermediate (3-6) levels.

Mr. Long explained current set-up forces a teacher to teach to mid-level students and that stepping stones would allow students to be more spread out according to their achievement levels for specific areas. Mr. Drzewiecki further commented that moving students from Mahoning to the other elementary buildings classroom counts would fall within acceptable levels, but in the future if enrollment increases then construction of additional classrooms might be needed.

Dr. Shaffer commented that the administration team has taken considerable time in detailing to the school board the options available. Dr. Shaffer as well as other school board members acknowledge that closing the Mahoning elementary building is not just about declining enrollment within the school district but as to the future of the district in maintaining the quality education that our community expects as well the school board being fiscally responsible to our community.

Members of the audience that commented to the school board are as follows:

Douglas Hopper
Richard Shreckengost
Jennifer Kemmer
Tina Shick
Chad Bish
Ted Wells
Ginnie Nelson
Heath Copenhaver
Carla Wells
Andrea Haines
Jeff Veronesi
Kendra Ritchie
Jessica Shumaker
Steve Truitt

After comments from the public Mr. Watson thanked the audience for questions to the school board members and administration team. Mr. Watson stated that this is the first step in the process and that within the 90 days additional questions will be presented and responded too by the school board and administration team. Mr. Watson reiterated that public participation is essential in helping the board make a decision.

At 9:32 P.M. the public hearing concluded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jack E. Loughner, Jr.
Board Secretary