

MORRISVILLE BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

In Re: PUBLIC HEARING ON POSSIBLE CLOSING
OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Hearing taken before the Morrisville
Board of School Directions, Morrisville Middle/
Senior High School, 550 West Palmer Avenue,
Morrisville, Pennsylvania, on Thursday,
January 29, 2009, scheduled for 7:00 p.m.,
taken by Lynda Scheswohl, Registered
Professional Court Reporter and Notary Public.

APPEARANCE:

BEGLEY, CARLIN & MANDIO
By: MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK, ESQUIRE
Representing Morrisville School District

BOARD MEMBERS APPEARANCES:

Bill Hellmann, President
Alfred Radosti, Vice President
Marlys Mihok, Secretary
Brenda Worob, Treasurer
William M. Farrell, Member
John Buckman, Member
Joseph Kemp, Member
Robin M. Reithmeyer, Member
Gloria Heater, Member

Also Present:

Dr. Elizabeth Hammond Yonson,
Superintendent of Schools
Paul DeAngelo, Business Administrator

Gary Pittman, VITETTA
William Corfield, VITETTA

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MR. FITZPATRICK: We're here this evening for a hearing under Section 780 of the Public School Code of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as amended.

The purpose of the hearing is to have the Administration, its contracted professionals, and members of the public who determine to participate in the hearing, to comment upon the permanent closure of the M.R. Reiter Elementary School.

As I said, this is a hearing. Everyone who presents testimony tonight will be sworn. You also will be giving your names to the court stenographer, Lynda, who is here tonight, so we'll have a full and complete record of the testimony this evening.

We ask that each speaker limit their comments to a reasonable time, perhaps three to four minutes, so that all members of the public will be given an opportunity to present testimony.

In addition, the School Board is willing to take additional testimony in writing; and everyone will be given until Monday, February

1 2nd, 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon to present
2 their written testimony to the secretary to the
3 School Board by delivering the written
4 testimony to the School District Administration
5 Building here at 550 West Palmer Avenue by
6 3:00 o'clock on Monday, February 2nd. And, of
7 course, the written testimony will be included
8 in the record along with the oral testimony
9 here this evening.

10 For the record, I want to state that
11 tonight's hearing was duly noticed, and the
12 Notice was posted in several prominent
13 locations throughout this building and we have
14 an Affidavit of Posting, which was executed
15 today by the secretary of the Board.

16 The Notice was posted on January 7th,
17 2009, and it has been continuously posted
18 through and up until this evening. The
19 Affidavit of Posting is being marked as Exhibit
20 1 for identification, and we're going to enter
21 it into the record this evening.

22 The Public Notice was also published in
23 the Bucks County Courier Times on January 9 and
24 January 12, 2009. The Proof of Publication, as
25 provided by the Bucks County Courier Times, has

1 been marked as Exhibit 2 for identification.

2 And both exhibits have been handed to the court
3 reporter tonight to be made part of the record.

4 I do want to note the presence of most of
5 our School Board members here this evening, in
6 addition to the president of the Board,
7 Mr. Hellmann. I see Gloria Heater is here,
8 Mr. Al Radosti, Bill Farrell, Jack Buckman,
9 Marlys Mihok, Joe Kemp, and Robin Reithmeyer.
10 I understand that Board member, Brenda Worob,
11 is in traffic but she's in transit and plans to
12 be here this evening.

13 At this point, Mr. President, I turn the
14 hearing over to you.

15 MR. HELLMANN: Okay. I'll just give a
16 brief format here. This evening's format is
17 going to be a little different than our usual
18 School Board meetings.

19 Instead, this is a hearing. Dr. Yonson,
20 of our Administration, will give a
21 presentation.

22 After that, VITETTA, who has been
23 commissioned by the Morrisville School District
24 to survey the Grandview Elementary School and
25 the M.R. Reiter Elementary School and evaluate

1 the major components of each building, will
2 also provide testimony, here to my left over
3 there.

4 After that, audience participation will be
5 taken. Any person wishing to address the Board
6 will need to complete the sign-up sheet here in
7 front of the room. I have it here for everyone
8 to sign up.

9 We ask only that you keep your comments
10 focused on the question before the Board with
11 regard to permanent closure of the M.R. Reiter
12 Elementary School.

13 All of your testimony, both verbal and
14 written, will be included in the record. If
15 you present questions, written or orally, those
16 questions will be taken down and all questions
17 will be answered in writing within a reasonable
18 degree of time and will be posted on the School
19 District Website so that everybody can have
20 access to them. Also, I believe it's going to
21 be posted, where else? The library --

22 DR. YONSON: Library, LG hall.

23 MR. HELLMANN: You may speak to the Board
24 one at a time, but we would appreciate if you
25 would keep your presentation brief.

1 Please bear in mind that there will be no
2 decision made in any way tonight. The decision
3 will be made within three months from the
4 hearing date.

5 At this time, I will turn the hearing over
6 to the Superintendent of our schools, Dr. Beth
7 Yonson.

8 Also, did you say the time limit? I think
9 we gave three to four minutes for each person.

10 Thank you.

11 DR. YONSON: The majority of our
12 presentation will be given by Mr. DeAngelo, our
13 business administrator, as well as our
14 architects and engineers.

15 But I would like just to give a little bit
16 of history. In 1999, there were 1,099 students
17 in the Morrisville School District. This
18 included the students who attended the
19 Vocational Technical High School.

20 Today in our school we have 855 children
21 in our buildings, 53 students who are at the
22 Vo-Tech, for a total of 908.

23 Now, in 1999 there were no charter schools
24 and also, there were no children in alternative
25 placements. Students usually stayed in their

1 home school for that. And that is an
2 additional 40 students that we have in
3 alternative placements and in charter schools.
4 26 in charter schools and 14 in alternative
5 placements, for a total of 40. If you would
6 add that to the total, it's 948 students.

7 Additionally, there are 17 students who
8 are I.U. students who are our students who are
9 also in the District. So 1,948, plus those 17
10 students. So as you can see, we are down a
11 little over about 100 students from 1999.

12 However, one of the things that was
13 decided by CAP -- the Community Action Planning
14 team made up of community members, Board
15 members, administrators. We met several times
16 with the facilitator, Ms. Joanne Brody, from
17 the Intermediate Unit, who facilitated those
18 meetings.

19 And during those meetings, it was decided,
20 because of the drop in enrollment, that one of
21 the elementary schools should be closed. That
22 was the consensus of that particular committee.
23 They did not make any determination as to what
24 school should be closed.

25 Another figure that is, I'm sure,

1 different from 1999 or before that is that 43
2 per cent of the residents of Morrisville are
3 renters, not just in apartments but also in the
4 homes. And unfortunately, this causes a very
5 transient population for our district. And so
6 that is currently what we are experiencing.

7 We have children coming and going every
8 single month. Not that other school districts
9 don't, but I believe that our numbers are
10 higher than other districts. And so we really
11 can't say to you whether the population will
12 grow or whether it will decrease because of the
13 transient nature.

14 As I said earlier today, I'm not
15 Nostradamus, and so I don't have a crystal ball
16 and I can't talk about that. Again, there have
17 to be many things that happen in the community
18 that you would see: Young families moving in
19 and then, of course, there would be an
20 increase.

21 But right now, we do have about a hundred
22 students less than we did in 1999.

23 At this time, I'm going to turn it over to
24 Mr. DeAngelo, who is going to talk about M.R.
25 Reiter and the condition of the building.

1 MR. FITZPATRICK: Before Mr. DeAngelo is
2 sworn and starts giving testimony, I just want
3 to make one item clear on the record.

4 Mr. Hellmann indicated tonight is a
5 hearing for the purpose of the School Board of
6 Directors to listen to the testimony of the
7 Administration, VITETTA Architectural Group,
8 and the public.

9 And as he indicated, no decision will be
10 made this evening. No deliberation will occur
11 this evening. This is just a hearing.

12 A decision will be made to either close or
13 not close M.R. Reiter, but that decision will
14 not be made until three months after tonight's
15 meeting. And so no decision can be made within
16 the next three months.

17 When three months pass, then the School
18 Board of Directors have the ability to put the
19 item on the agenda with regard to the closure
20 of the school. I just want to make that item
21 clear. Thank you.

22 MR. HELLMANN: Paul, are you ready?

23 MR. DeANGELO: Yes.

24 Good evening. On December 7th, 2006, the
25 Morrisville School District had an appraisal

1 done from Gleason Real Estate, Incorporated. I
2 want to put on the record a couple of these
3 items.

4 The property type for M.R. Reiter is
5 public elementary school on 3.096 acres. The
6 location of the school is the northwest corner
7 of Harper Avenue and Clymer Avenue, Morrisville
8 Borough, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The tax
9 map parcel numbers are 24-009-107-001 to
10 24-009-107-003.

11 The appraisal of the gross building area
12 was 46,200 square feet. Gross land area, as I
13 mentioned, is 3.096 acres. The zoning is CS-1,
14 which is Community Service District.

15 The as-is value appraisal at that time,
16 again which was December 7th, 2006, was
17 \$995,000. Year to date, since we've had the
18 explosion at M.R. Reiter, our insurance claim
19 is estimated at 1.15 million dollars.

20 Some of the history of M.R. Reiter: In
21 1924, the Robert Morris High School was built
22 next to the historic Somerset Summerseat, where
23 the Administration Office used to operate out
24 of.

25 In 1959, the original Robert Morris High

1 School was destroyed by fire and was later
2 rebuilt as the current M.R. Reiter Elementary
3 School.

4 The age of the furnaces -- there are two
5 of them in M.R. Reiter, one of which exploded
6 on December 13, 2008, is estimated to be at
7 least from 1959. We have no record that there
8 was any work done between 1924 and 1959. But
9 we're assuming that once the renovations were
10 done to the school and it was rebuilt, the
11 furnace was at least 1959.

12 One of the things that we spoke about
13 today is usually the useful life of the furnace
14 is probably about 20 years. So this furnace
15 should have been replaced twice in this time
16 frame.

17 At this point, I would turn it over to the
18 architects.

19 MR. HELLMANN: Before the witnesses start,
20 we'll have them sworn in.

21 -----

22 WILLIAM CORFIELD and GARY PITTMAN, having
23 been duly sworn, were examined and testified as
24 follows:

25 -----

1 MR. CORFIELD: Good evening. My name is
2 Bill Corfield. I'm a VITETTA architect, a
3 licensed architect in various states, including
4 Pennsylvania. I am a licensed planner and I'm
5 a licensed interior designer.

6 Our firm was hired to do a study of what
7 we call the infrastructure of both the
8 Grandview School and the M.R. Reiter School
9 just so that a comparison could be done to what
10 school is in better condition when you're
11 looking at the building systems and some of the
12 exterior enclosure.

13 These items are such as heating units,
14 boilers, electrical and plumbing
15 infrastructure. And again, the unit
16 ventilators, which are the heaters that are in
17 the classroom, or sometimes in classrooms;
18 exhaust fans; general lighting; general
19 distribution power -- you know how there are
20 outlets around the building, et cetera; the
21 condition of the lights as far as the lighting
22 levels that are being produced by the lights;
23 and simple functioning of, you know, the
24 plumbing fixtures, et cetera.

25 Another major thing that we were supposed

1 to look at was the condition of the window
2 systems throughout the two buildings.

3 So our staff came here, engineers came
4 here, architects came here. Spent many hours
5 in the building, many days in the building just
6 doing an analysis, comparative analysis on
7 these systems.

8 And our charge was then to create
9 spreadsheets or line-item sheets that showed
10 the items that we looked at. We identified the
11 condition that they were in basically in the
12 report, and then put a prioritization of what
13 was the most important down to the least
14 important.

15 And we put a number value on what it would
16 take to address any particular concern, so that
17 it could be used as a comparison from school to
18 school and a determination could be made what
19 school, if some school was to be closed, would
20 be the more appropriate school to remain open.

21 We were not charged with looking at the
22 curriculum, the program, the size of the
23 classrooms, the functioning of the school
24 from -- you know, how classrooms are adjacent
25 to one another and should be and should not be.

1 However, when my staff came here, it
2 became apparent to us that certain concerns,
3 other than just these things, needed to be
4 looked at: Namely, barrier-free or handicap
5 accessibility to the buildings. And if there
6 were any other items that seemed to be of
7 concern to us, we noted them in this report.

8 The report that I'm referring to is the
9 report that is on your Website now for anyone
10 to see. The complete report has been there now
11 for a few weeks. I think since the end of --
12 or middle of December.

13 The idea then, I mean once we started to
14 go through the buildings -- and let me say one
15 other thing too. From a functionality point of
16 view, the way you move around a building,
17 whenever architects -- and this is as far as my
18 expertise is. Whenever I plan a brand new
19 building, when you're going to try to build a
20 building or plan a building for an elementary
21 school, for elementary school use, namely,
22 young children, PreK through fifth grade, it is
23 always more advantageous to have it on one
24 floor. You're not dealing with stairs. You're
25 not dealing with children on a second floor in

1 case of an emergency trying to get them out of
2 the building.

3 And it's just generally more accepted
4 practice that it's a better way to design a
5 school. Any school, if you can design it, on
6 one floor is better. Of course, spatial
7 consideration -- how big your site is, et
8 cetera -- will dictate that. But, in general,
9 if you can design a school on one floor it is
10 better.

11 That being said, obviously, the Grandview
12 School is a single-story building; and M.R.
13 Reiter School is actually a two and-a-half
14 story building where there's two floors, and
15 then there's an intermediate floor that has to
16 be traversed between the two floors which makes
17 it a little bit hard to get around the
18 building. Furthermore, there is no
19 accessibility for a handicapped person to these
20 spaces.

21 So when we started to look at these two
22 schools, it becomes apparent that there are
23 benefits inherent in one school over the other
24 immediately.

25 Another thing is -- and I don't have this

1 exact data, unfortunately. It was just stated
2 that the M.R. Reiter School has 3.096 acres.

3 I don't have any data on the Grandview
4 School. But it appears to be that that site,
5 based on a limited site plan that we had, is a
6 considerably larger site. But I'd have to
7 confirm that information.

8 So going down the path that we went
9 down -- and you can see this again in the
10 Executive Summary on the Website -- we looked
11 at all of the items. We did comparisons.

12 It's obvious that the M.R. Reiter School,
13 as Mr. DeAngelo mentioned, was originally built
14 in 1924. Some of the items are obviously
15 original. A lot of the items are obviously
16 original.

17 That in and of itself makes the school
18 40-years older than the Grandview School. That
19 normally starts to trigger other things.
20 Things like settling of the building. Things
21 like very hard places to access through the
22 building. The way buildings were designed
23 almost 100 years ago was substantially
24 different than what they're designed to do now;
25 taking into consideration passage of the

1 utilities through the building, being able to
2 access spaces, et cetera. Some of the walls in
3 the M.R. Reiter building I believe are near
4 2-foot thick. Very hard to get utilities
5 through, et cetera.

6 When we walked through the building in the
7 M.R. Reiter building, there was also a concern
8 that there has been and continues to be a
9 considerable amount of water entry into that
10 building on the lower floors, particularly in
11 the multipurpose room.

12 At such a point where at one point -- I
13 don't know when this was -- but the wood floor
14 in the gymnasium, where the multipurpose room
15 was, was removed because of the amount of water
16 that came into that building and continues to
17 come in. And a different type of synthetic
18 floor was put in its place.

19 We have some major concerns about the
20 amount of water that comes into that building
21 and actually where it comes from. And so
22 consideration has to be made of what to do with
23 that amount of water and how to control it and
24 stop it from coming into the building.

25 So you'll see that beyond the analysis of

1 the electrical systems, the heating systems, et
2 cetera, some of these other items have to be
3 addressed when you're looking at that school.

4 Even though we really weren't asked to
5 look at that, we felt it was important to note
6 some of these things here, and they have been
7 noted.

8 And almost in closing, you know, any kind
9 of renovation project -- and the intent here,
10 understand that one building is superior to the
11 other, in our opinion; but any kind of a
12 renovation project, meaning that if you were
13 determining that you were to going improve one
14 building, any project is challenging,
15 obviously.

16 The condition of the building will
17 certainly impact the renovation costs. There
18 are certain things that we could never know how
19 much they're going to cost.

20 We make an assumption, based on knowledge
21 and what we're seeing today in the industry,
22 about how much something is going to cost. I
23 can tell you how much a boiler is going to
24 cost, but I can't really tell you how much it's
25 going to cost to stop that water from coming in

1 without doing a lot of destructive testing and
2 finding out where the water is and what we're
3 going to do to get the water around the
4 building in some manner. So there's always
5 challenges.

6 We've always noted that probably because
7 of this water entry, some of the -- the
8 building is settling in such a fashion that
9 there's major cracks developing in the
10 building. I think they've been there for a
11 while. They're not getting any better.

12 And upon recent discussion with
13 Mr. Lastichen, Tim Lastichen, the man in charge
14 of buildings and grounds, there are separations
15 happening on the roof now at some of the major
16 walls that are directly related to where the
17 cracks are happening in the lower portions of
18 this building.

19 So something is happening here and
20 something really needs to be done about it to
21 stop it from getting any worse.

22 So generally, we believe that the
23 Grandview School is in better condition than
24 the M.R. Reiter School.

25 Some of the windows in the Grandview

1 School are newer. Maybe some of them can stay
2 in place.

3 We recommend generally replacing all the
4 windows. They're all in excess of 50 years
5 old. None of them have insulated glass. None
6 of them have insulated frames.

7 When you stand next to one of the windows
8 in either school, it's cold. There are areas
9 where you'll feel wind coming through the
10 windows even when they're closed.

11 There are things that need to be changed
12 and they should be changed. And this is the
13 type of thing that happens in any school
14 district. When a window reaches about 40 years
15 old, generally it's time to change it.

16 The technology has changed substantially.
17 The way you open a window, it would be much
18 easier nowadays. They put balancers in so you
19 don't have to pull on the window.

20 You've got windows in both schools that
21 just do not work. They've been screwed shut.
22 It's just not the right thing to do. It was
23 mentioned at the high school replacing those
24 windows because they're just not efficient any
25 longer.

1 And then, of course, you get into the
2 whole it is more efficient, you'll save energy
3 because you're stopping the air infiltration,
4 you're stopping the heat from going out in the
5 winter, you're stopping the sun and heat coming
6 in in the summer.

7 So these are beneficial things that should
8 be done on a regular basis in any school.

9 We didn't see any significant cracks in --
10 cracks in the walls or water infiltration in
11 the Grandview School. So that really set it
12 apart.

13 So based on that, we would recommend, if
14 in fact we were asked to put that
15 recommendation here, that we think if any
16 school is going to be utilized for an
17 elementary school, the more appropriate school
18 at this point in time to Morrisville would be
19 the Grandview Elementary School.

20 We have not analyzed classroom numbers.
21 We have not analyzed any type of
22 appropriateness of -- just from a physical
23 condition of the building, this is what our
24 observations are.

25 MR. FITZPATRICK: Mr. Corfield, you have

1 referenced in your testimony a report that was
2 prepared. I'm going to hand you a report that
3 I have marked Exhibit 3 for identification.

4 Is that the report you are referring to?

5 MR. CORFIELD: Yes, it is.

6 MR. FITZPATRICK: I would just ask you to
7 deliver it to Lynda, the court reporter, to be
8 made part of the record.

9 MR. CORFIELD: Right now?

10 MR. FITZPATRICK: It will just take a
11 moment.

12 MR. CORFIELD: (Complying.)

13 -----

14 GARY PITTMAN, having been previously duly
15 sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

16 -----

17 MR. PITTMAN: My name is Gary Pittman.
18 I'm the director of engineering for VITETTA. I
19 just want to add a couple things to what Bill
20 pointed out.

21 As we went through the comparison between
22 the two schools, M.R. Reiter and Grandview, we
23 also developed some estimated costs for the
24 renovations and additional work that were
25 required.

1 Drive, Morrisville, Pennsylvania.

2 I guess where I want to start is I'm new
3 here, maybe about five years. I was able to
4 access a lot of this information online. I
5 assume the VITETTA report you're talking about
6 is dated December 16, 2008.

7 Generally, I believe the initial
8 feasibility study options provided us five
9 different options where you could either close
10 schools, renovate schools, build a new campus
11 and such.

12 If one of these schools are closed, have
13 you decided on which option you would like to
14 move forward with at that point? Or is that
15 yet to be determined?

16 MR. HELLMANN: There is no response.

17 MR. WATERS: I'm just supposed to ask
18 questions, right.

19 MR. FITZPATRICK: Kevin, we're going to
20 note each of the questions, as I said in the
21 opening. And each of the questions will be
22 referred to the Administration and
23 professionals. They'll be answered within a
24 reasonable period of time. And all of the Q
25 and A will be posted on the Website.

1 MR. WATERS: Fair enough.

2 That means that if the resolution is to
3 close one school, I would ask: What are you
4 going to do next?

5 A long story short -- I apologize, this is
6 my first time doing this. I really wanted to
7 focus on information provided in the initial
8 report called Bid Results, Analysis and
9 Options.

10 The opportunity to build a new school
11 might be a good option here. It seemed to be
12 the most cost-effective, if we have to close a
13 school regardless.

14 As noted before, the renovation costs can
15 clearly go out of control. If you have the
16 opportunity to start from scratch, it might be
17 helpful.

18 For those that are opposed to potentially
19 building a new school, I would like to remind
20 them that good, strong school systems are very
21 important to our home values and make this area
22 a desirable school system to live in.

23 From my review of the existing systems
24 evaluations, VITETTA report, these schools have
25 functional issues. They have asbestos on the

1 floors. Neither school has sprinklers. I have
2 material concerns about the conditions of these
3 schools.

4 Moreover, to the extent that we have
5 systems that should have been replaced over 20
6 years ago, I have concerns about why they
7 weren't replaced 20 years ago.

8 Additionally, to the extent that some of
9 this information was not distributed, I think
10 it could have been distributed in a more
11 efficient manner: Giving notice that this
12 information was available, maybe distributing
13 it to the kids so they could distribute it to
14 their parents.

15 You kind of have to go out of your way to
16 find this information. I don't know how many
17 people here have actually read the reports or
18 knew where they were. You've got to dig and
19 they were materially hard to print and
20 download.

21 I don't want to take too much time. But
22 my main concern about building this --
23 potentially building this new school is: How
24 do we address the kids' safety? If you're
25 going to put kindergarteners with, you know,

1 high school kids, things happen. I think if
2 you look at the presentation that was provided,
3 the design there, there might be flexibility in
4 that design to address those concerns. So that
5 would be one of my concerns.

6 But to the extent that we have to put
7 capital into an old defunct building with, God
8 knows, how much actual renovation costs is
9 going to escalate -- and when you do renovation
10 projects, they typically do. Professionally,
11 I've either sold or financed a billion three in
12 commercial real estate, so I do have an idea of
13 how costs can get out of control.

14 I do think to the extent we can start from
15 scratch, you can mitigate those cost increases
16 because you're not -- you're starting from
17 scratch as opposed to building onto something.

18 I don't want to take too much time but I
19 do think that if you have the opportunity to
20 address the safety issue --

21 MR. HELLMANN: It's four minutes.

22 MR. WATERS: Thank you.

23 -----

24 ED BAILEY, having been duly sworn, was
25 examined and testified as follows:

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MR. BAILEY: Ed Bailey, 36 East Palmer Street. I'm here as a father and taxpayer, voter. I would kind of like to put this into perspective a little bit.

This is a matter of concern, but I really am more concerned with what goes on inside the school than I am with the buildings themselves. As long as we have, you know, safe, reasonably comfortable school buildings to accommodate our students, that's -- as long as it's adequate, I'm happy with that.

What I want is to have really good education going on inside the building. So I don't think we should be losing focus and putting so much emphasis on that, but we do need to deal with the issue.

I'm also concerned about how we decide issues in local government. I don't want there to be this seesawing back and forth. I think we should be able to come up with a reasonable compromise, a workable compromise that the majority of this Board, the voters will support.

That being said, I see there's been a lot

1 of anger and upset over this. I heard
2 people -- I think Angel Stamps commented that
3 she was losing sleep over this. And when we
4 had the new school issue, we were -- people
5 were losing sleep over it.

6 That's why I would really like to see that
7 we come together, decide as a majority of the
8 voters what we want. And of course, there's
9 going to be people at the extreme that don't
10 want it, but there will always be people at the
11 extremes that are not satisfied.

12 What I don't want is that we get all bent
13 out of shape over the issue, and then that
14 gives an opportunity for the Courier Times to
15 print the kind of articles that Morrisville
16 residents hate where we're portrayed as a bunch
17 of morons that get up and yell at the podium
18 and make fools of ourselves at these public
19 meetings.

20 Now, specifically, I would regret seeing
21 M.R. Reiter closed, because my daughter was
22 there from kindergarten to second grade. So
23 just for purely sentimental reasons I would be
24 sorry to see it go.

25 But on the other hand, I presume we're

1 going to be seeing detailed cost estimates of
2 what it would cost to keep M.R. Reiter open as
3 opposed to keeping Grandview open.

4 And I would also like to know if this
5 issue could be the subject of a referendum.
6 That's the second thing I would like to find
7 out.

8 The third thing I would like to know about
9 is then, well, if M.R. Reiter is to be
10 closed -- because it sounds as though that's
11 what the cost estimate is going to be the
12 better choice, then how is it going to be
13 disposed of? Is it going to be kept open
14 space? Is the building going to be kept
15 intact, rented out, sold, what?

16 Another thing that I heard Eileen
17 Dreisbach suggest. I was talking to her and
18 she suggested we reopen Manor Park. The point
19 that she made at the mike here at a School
20 Board meeting was that the Manor Park lease to
21 the Head Start Program could be broken if we
22 had need to have that school back. So I would
23 like to see some discussion of that as part of
24 the --

25 MR. HELLMANN: That's four.

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ANN PERRY, having been duly sworn, was
examined and testified as follows:

MS. PERRY: Good evening. Ann Perry, 43
Fairview Avenue.

Since our questions will be answered in a
reasonable time period, I have a bunch.

Number one. What's next if M.R. Reiter is
closed?

If closing M.R. Reiter is a done-deal, as
it appears to be, then what will happen to that
property? Sale? Reconstruction? Demolition?
Conversion to open space? Et cetera.

Why does the public find out most of its
information about the Board from the local
newspaper?

What steps, if any, will the Board take to
significantly improve the transparency of its
actions in the future?

Why hasn't the Board or Mr. Fitzpatrick
asked parents their opinions about this
seven-month quest to farm out our high school
students?

What was the point of having Community

1 Action Plan Meetings, CAP meetings, as
2 Dr. Yonson spoke of, if the School Board makes
3 its decisions without the advice of parents and
4 residents?

5 What are the elements of Mr. Hellmann's
6 six-point plan that you've mentioned in public
7 but about which the public has no information?
8 If the exact number of points in the plan is
9 known, it must be relatively detailed.

10 When will this plan be shared with the
11 public? When will the plan be voted on by the
12 entire Board? How long does the Board intend
13 to let M.R. Reiter sit vacant if the Board
14 can't sell it at a reasonable price? What
15 actions will the Board take to prevent M.R.
16 Reiter from becoming a blighted eyesore if it
17 does sit vacant?

18 Mr. Farrell previously indicated that
19 there should have been devices installed to
20 prevent what happened to the M.R. Reiter
21 furnace. When will the Board be voting to
22 procure and install such devices at Grandview
23 and the middle school and high school?

24 Why was Mr. Ron Stout the only member of
25 the public invited or informed of the classroom

1 tours that were conducted by the Board in the
2 October 2008 timeframe?

3 Why has the Board elected not to pursue
4 renovations at Grandview or the Middle/High
5 School in accordance with the Pennsylvania
6 Department of Education Plan Process by which a
7 significant portion of the renovation costs may
8 be reimbursable?

9 Has the Board considered the impact the
10 current cramming situation has on the children?
11 In what ways has it considered this impact?
12 What steps has the Board made to minimize this
13 impact?

14 Why are the first graders in the hallway
15 trying to learn? How much of a fire hazard is
16 this? Why are there not adequate bathroom
17 facilities for the children that have to go in
18 shifts? Why are there still multiple
19 classrooms being held in the library?

20 How does the closing of M.R. Reiter affect
21 the busing situation if Grandview is beyond the
22 walking stone? When will this emergency
23 situation end? When will a reasonable
24 nonemergency solution be presented? As it is,
25 we traded a modern day building to building up

1 to Code and designed to segregate the grades
2 for all code buildings with makeshift
3 arrangements.

4 What is the threshold for renovations or
5 changes that forces the Board to bring the
6 existing buildings up to current code?

7 I want to make sure that everyone is aware
8 that special education classroom space has been
9 displaced at the high school. How is the Board
10 compensating for this?

11 After-school programs have been displaced
12 and will continue to be affected. Has the
13 Board considered the impact of reduced space on
14 the after-school programs? What actions are
15 being taken to address this?

16 What steps are being taken to protect the
17 safety and security of our students? I'm not
18 going to go into any more detail about that
19 because I don't want to give anyone ideas about
20 how easy it might be to harm one of our
21 children there.

22 What is being done to address the
23 absolutely perilous traffic situation of both
24 the Middle/High School and --

25 MR. HELLMANN: That's four minutes. Thank

1 the permanent closure of this school.

2 Despite improved Morrisville scores, which
3 are in no way attributable to this Board
4 majority, the fact is that the Board majority
5 has failed to properly address the conditions
6 of the school buildings. And it's had one
7 school building experience a furnace explosion
8 and because unusable on its watch.

9 The elementary students are currently
10 jammed into the Middle-High School and the
11 other elementary school with PreK students at
12 the local YMCA. At best, these students may be
13 put into trailers for many months, maybe even
14 years. Further student shuffling is currently
15 happening, adding to the inconvenience and to
16 the disruption of educational programs.

17 Board members and supporters, who in my
18 opinion are quite hypocritical, when they
19 railed against putting younger and older
20 students into the school building, now they
21 seem to be quite fine with this arrangement.

22 The bond monies set aside by a prior Board
23 majority to build a new, energy and
24 space-efficient, secure K through 12 campus,
25 which could have been a long-term solution to

1 address building conditions, were largely
2 returned at a cost of 2.5 million dollars,
3 which was not revealed to the public or the
4 full Board prior to the January 30, 2008 vote
5 to diffuse the bonds.

6 Now in my opinion, not enough money
7 remains to properly renovate the school
8 buildings. The money was returned a year ago
9 before the Board had any reliable idea about
10 what renovations would cost.

11 I'm going to turn in this docket as
12 written testimony as well.

13 But I guess in closing, residents, parents
14 and students alike have all repeatedly asked
15 the Board for a thoughtful, coherent, properly
16 executed long-term plan to address the physical
17 condition of the school buildings and fulfill
18 its obligation to provide a quality, safe,
19 responsible education to the students of
20 Morrisville.

21 After 15 months in office, no such plan
22 exists. Unfortunately, I have no confidence
23 that this Board, with its current composition,
24 can accomplish this.

25 Four of the nine Board seats opened this

1 year -- are open this year. If you are
2 dissatisfied with the Board majority's
3 performance, the Tuesday, May 19, primary
4 election is the next big opportunity to change
5 the composition of this Board. I urge the
6 public to stay informed about what this Board
7 is doing and about alternatives to this kind of
8 performance. Thank you.

9 -----

10 JOHANNY MANNING, having been duly sworn, was
11 examined and testified as follows:

12 -----

13 MS. MANNING: I'm Johanny Manning, 449
14 Stockham Avenue.

15 What I find amazing is that the VITETTA
16 report is exactly what we thought it was. We
17 had a report done previously. You told us the
18 same thing.

19 But I find it ironic that the School Board
20 members sitting behind me, as well as
21 Mr. Hellmann in front of me, didn't believe
22 that report then; we had to spend the money to
23 do yet another one. Reiter needs work. We
24 knew that. That was the reason why we thought
25 Reiter needed to go.

1 What I didn't find in your report, the
2 VITETTA report, is that you're saying that
3 Grandview is going to cost us 2.6 million
4 dollars to renovate as is. Correct?

5 That means, like for like, that new space
6 is not large enough for the children that we
7 have. It is not capable of holding what we
8 needed to hold.

9 What are our long-term renovation plans?
10 I haven't seen one. I don't know if there was
11 a meeting, a planning meeting that I missed
12 about that.

13 We obviously cannot be in portables long
14 term. What's that going to cost us if we have
15 to stay in portables and continue to rent them,
16 Mr. DeAngelo?

17 That, you know, is a concern for me.
18 Obviously, we are using the money that we got
19 from the insurance but what's going to happen
20 past that? Once that is expended and we have
21 to start footing the bill as taxpayers, what is
22 that going to cost us to do that?

23 What things have been moved or interrupted
24 because of cramming everyone into Grandview?
25 Where is currently our nurse? I hear our

1 learning support and our gifted are now sharing
2 space. What happened to music and art? What
3 is going to happen to our library? What is
4 going on with our 21st Century programs that
5 were so much needed? And that was the reason
6 why we had gotten them as a grant, because this
7 town needs them to survive. They have provided
8 so much to these children and we need to
9 continue to provide those.

10 What about the capacity of our all-purpose
11 room, which I know previously before
12 December -- I haven't been there to verify if
13 it's still there. It said a hundred, that that
14 room, our all-purpose room in Grandview, was
15 not supposed to be more than a hundred. What's
16 going on now when we have got so many children
17 in there for our lunch periods?

18 I understand that our portables are
19 working right now, but we can't count on them
20 forever. What is happening long term at the
21 high school that we're bringing up our fifth
22 graders, but what renovations are being done to
23 isolate them from the rest of the students? I
24 know we currently have WIN, but we also have a
25 science class that is still being held there.

1 Why are we not isolating them and using our
2 funds?

3 I would also like to read for the record
4 an e-mail from Mr. Bill Hellmann dated
5 Wednesday, June 25, 2008, 10:24 a.m. It was
6 addressed to Mrs. Heater.

7 And it states, "Look, we have \$7 million
8 to renovate. No more. Whatever kids do not
9 fit in Grandview, put in high school. There is
10 no perfect solution. Too bad!" exclamation
11 point. "Put fourth and fifth in high school.
12 Make Grand View" -- and I should say it says GV
13 -- "Grandview K through 3 I still say all in
14 high school. Too bad. And tuition out nine
15 through 12. Eventually high school will be K
16 through 8. I do not care what the losers say.
17 They do not know our expense problems over the
18 next decade. They just do not get it. I will
19 be the bad guy. I need only four other votes.
20 You can abstain if you want. You can just get
21 me four other votes behind the scenes. OK."

22 I want to make sure we got that on the
23 record because the statement that was said by
24 Mr. Hellmann and Mr. Fitzpatrick that this
25 decision has not been made yet is obviously a

1 lie. Thank you.

2 -----

3 KATHRYN PANZITTA, having been duly sworn, was
4 examined and testified as follows:

5 -----

6 MS. PANZITTA: Kathryn Panzitta, 401
7 Hillcrest Avenue.

8 What I will say tonight is that of my own
9 personal opinion and in no way is affected to
10 my elected position.

11 Dear School Board members and Pennsylvania
12 Department of Education. I'm here tonight to
13 voice my opinion at this public hearing on the
14 closing of the M.R. Reiter School.

15 I have attended various School Board
16 meetings, School Board Finance Committee
17 meetings and School Board Facility meetings
18 over the last few years and have yet to hear a
19 plan as to how the School Board of Morrisville
20 plans to close a building and continue to
21 provide the educational programs and services
22 to the Morrisville residents that have been
23 provided at this facility in the past, until
24 your little presentation this evening. And I
25 still have not heard any educationally-related

1 items being addressed.

2 How can anyone make an informed decision
3 or form an informed opinion, when the entire
4 subject of closing the M.R. Reiter building has
5 never been discussed in a public meeting prior
6 to this evening as to how closing a building
7 affects the entire Morrisville Borough public
8 education system as a whole?

9 Morrisville School Board and the State of
10 Pennsylvania has a historic commitment to
11 ensuring access to education to its most
12 vulnerable citizens and we expend vast sums of
13 public resources on education.

14 Public and private initiatives are
15 underway to improve access, improve quality of
16 education, hold districts accountable for PSSA
17 scores and produce greater value for the
18 dollars spent on education.

19 These problems will not be solved
20 overnight, as the challenges facing Morrisville
21 School District developed over a long period
22 and cannot be linked to a single time, policy
23 or School Board. These challenges must be
24 addressed, as they relate to physically closing
25 an elementary school building.

1 The governor, legislature, and the
2 Pennsylvania Department of Education should
3 recognize the desired financial pressures
4 placed on property tax owners in small school
5 districts where economies of scale cannot be
6 accomplished due to the small number of
7 children being serviced with very large
8 administrative overhead and capital
9 construction costs.

10 Added to this challenge is the additional
11 financial pressure within Morrisville School
12 District to service a high disproportionate
13 number of special education need students
14 without adequate federal and state funding
15 available.

16 How would the closing of your M.R. Reiter
17 building meet these children's needs?

18 Everything must be considered before
19 making any decisions. And I truly believe the
20 Morrisville School Board members should not put
21 taxes and public opinion before the oaths they
22 took when they first sat on that School Board,
23 and when they take the vote to close or not
24 close the M.R. Reiter building.

25 I hope over the next three months the

1 Morrisville School Board gives the Morrisville
2 community more information publicly concerning
3 this issue and not force individuals, like
4 myself, to have to read personal e-mails to
5 gather information.

6 Let me state for the record, I recall the
7 Morrisville School Board placing on the agenda,
8 at an agenda-setting meeting prior to the M.R.
9 Reiter explosion, a request for advertising
10 closing M.R. Reiter School.

11 As three minutes is not adequate time --

12 MR. HELLMANN: Kathy, it's four.

13 MS. PANZITTA: -- to speak intelligently,
14 I will submit additional written comments.
15 Thank you.

16 -----

17 SUSAN SCOTT, having been duly sworn, was
18 examined and testified as follows:

19 -----

20 MS. SCOTT: Susan Scott, 108 Melvin
21 Avenue.

22 I would just like to address the Board.
23 I've been to quite a few of these meetings
24 before but never came up to speak.

25 You ran on a platform basically saying

1 that you did not want the children in a K
2 through 12 setting. The previous Board already
3 made these problems in both elementary schools.
4 They were aware of the situations and their
5 decision to fix it was to build a new school.
6 You stopped this new school and you have no
7 plan on how to rectify it.

8 What has happened since December 13 was
9 the children have been moved into the high
10 school. The hardest part is my second grader
11 comes home and constantly says, "Mommy, where
12 am I going to go to school tomorrow?" Due to
13 this, she's having various problems adjusting
14 to her school work and I have seen a decline in
15 her grades.

16 While I attend these meetings, the
17 constant focus is always on dollars and what
18 it's going to take to fix the school, not on
19 the education of our children.

20 I have heard it again tonight and
21 Mr. Hellmann has previously talked about the
22 six-step plan and the first step is closing
23 M.R. Reiter. I want to know what the other
24 five steps are going to be.

25 Also the VITETTA report talked about the

1 Grandview being the best alternative. The
2 problem is the school isn't big enough if we
3 were to move all the children in there. The
4 multipurpose room is barely big enough to fit
5 what's in there, and no more. Therefore, if we
6 were to have any type of assemblies, they
7 couldn't have those.

8 I guess that's all I have to say.

9

10 DAMON MILLER, having been duly sworn, was
11 examined and testified as follows:

12

13 MR. MILLER: Damon Miller, 249 West
14 Franklin Street.

15 Addressing the issue of closing M.R.
16 Reiter Elementary School. I do not believe the
17 School Board majority has thought this through
18 and what could happen to this district if the
19 school was to be closed.

20 Their constant thinking of today, instead
21 of thinking about how their actions will affect
22 tomorrow, I believe is what has brought this
23 district to the problems we are discussing this
24 evening.

25 Even Mr. Farrell, at a recent School Board

1 meeting, criticized the name of a local group
2 called Morrisville Tomorrow, saying that he was
3 thinking of the Morrisville of today.

4 If M.R. Reiter was to be closed, where
5 would the students that used to be educated
6 there be schooled? Soon grades 1 and 2 will be
7 housed in modulars placed on the Grandview
8 property, and the fifth grade will be moving
9 into the high school.

10 There's currently not enough room to house
11 more grades in Grandview. So I ask: How long
12 will grades 1 and 2 be placed in the modulars?
13 Will more grades be screened into the high
14 school?

15 If you need to fit two grades into
16 Grandview, then two grades need to move out of
17 Grandview. Where are they to go? Does this
18 mean the high school will become a 3 through 12
19 facility?

20 The Board majority, with Mr. Hellmann
21 leading the way, believes more students can fit
22 into the high school. As a matter of fact,
23 Mr. Hellmann, working off of numbers alone,
24 believes that all of the students in this
25 district can fit in this building, with no

1 thought on the effects this will have on the
2 education process.

3 And what if all of the students can't fit
4 in the high school? Will the Board follow
5 through with Mr. Hellmann's plan to tuition out
6 the high school students to make room for the
7 lower grades?

8 This Board needs to realize that our
9 children are not numbers or dollar signs but
10 they are citizens of this community, too, and
11 deserve to be treated as such.

12 Speaking of dollar signs, I understand
13 that the insurance company is willing to
14 provide one million dollars to replace the
15 heaters and chimneys in Reiter. Will the Board
16 consider this as an option, since Reiter is a
17 larger school and is centrally located?

18 Mr. Hellmann said he would not close the
19 school without holding a referendum. Will that
20 be done? 2.6 million dollars to renovate
21 Grandview. Will that be to include adding the
22 grades that are housed in the modulars?

23 A good school system is a major deciding
24 point for people when selecting a home. If
25 this Board continues on the path it is leading

1 this district on, property values will surely
2 continue to stay low, despite whatever the
3 market does.

4 For those who don't think property values
5 affect you, think of when you need to do
6 renovation to your home or sending your
7 children to college or maybe doing a reverse
8 mortgage so you can stay in your home.

9 If none of those things affect you, what
10 about your neighbors? When your neighbors sell
11 their home, are you willing to gamble on the
12 type of neighbors you will get when low
13 property values come into play?

14 I agree with Mr. Bailey. A pendulum has
15 been wildly swinging to the extremes in this
16 town for years, from having a new school to
17 making our children someone else's problem.
18 The swinging of this pendulum has to stop. And
19 it is time that we, as a community, take care
20 of our own.

21 That is why if this community so desires,
22 I will be petitioning my name to be included on
23 this May's primary election ballot. It is time
24 for our community to have a School Board that
25 will keep all of the Board's commitments in

1 mind when decisions are made and make progress
2 happen that will benefit everyone.

3 It is time to bring back the pride of
4 Morrisville of yesterday. It is time to face
5 the issues of Morrisville of today. And it is
6 time to create a better Morrisville for
7 tomorrow. Thank you.

8 -----

9 MARIZOL TIRADO, having been duly sworn, was
10 examined and testified as follows:

11 -----

12 MS. TIRADO: First, I want to say that
13 most of the parents spoke so well and answered
14 a lot of my questions, so this is going to be
15 pretty brief.

16 I wanted to say that I moved into
17 Morrisville two and-a-half years ago from
18 Trenton. I moved here so that my kids can live
19 in a safe neighborhood and be in smaller
20 schools. Boy, I was in for a rude awakening
21 when I moved here.

22 In the fall of 2006, my twins entered
23 kindergarten and my eldest entered the eighth
24 grade in the Morrisville School District.

25 Little did I know that by choosing a home

1 in this School District, I put my children in a
2 School District that, although it employs a
3 very hard-working school staff, it doesn't care
4 to provide a good quality education for its
5 children.

6 My children's education is continuously
7 threatened. One day I hear that one of my
8 children may not be able to receive the special
9 education services that he requires because the
10 School Board has decided to cut the special
11 education budget.

12 Just when I think I'm over that hurdle,
13 the news begins to circulate that the School
14 Board is considering closing the school. Then
15 it's the news of refusing to make necessary
16 repairs.

17 Then the unfortunate incident of the
18 school furnace. They're moved into another
19 school until repairs are made, which turns into
20 the thing of children going into trailers.

21 All of the changes, all the scheduled
22 changes, the children being moved around, the
23 after-school programs the children look forward
24 to, are canceled temporarily and some are just
25 plain canceled.

1 After all of that, imagine my fear when I
2 read an editorial in the Courier Times
3 yesterday that stated this School District is
4 petitioning other districts to send our high
5 schools out.

6 If I wanted my children to attend another
7 School District, I would have bought a home
8 there, not here. It amazes me how much anxiety
9 you have caused the parents and children of
10 this town.

11 How can the children of this School
12 District academically prosper when their
13 services are constantly interrupted and their
14 right to a good education taken away from them?

15 If my children can't attend school in
16 their own town, why would I continue to live
17 here? I've heard mention in other media of
18 doing what's best for the community. They are
19 the community.

20 I've watched so many young families move
21 into this town with their small children.
22 Without having a school to go to, why would we
23 continue to live here?

24 And when we go -- and we will when our
25 children are gone -- how well do you think this

1 town will survive? There will be no town.
2 There will be no community.

3 So I end with this. Since it is apparent
4 that a good education for the children and
5 future of this town is not a priority, think
6 about what is going to be left of this town
7 when the children move to another school
8 district. Thank you.

9 -----

10 LORENA YOUNG, having been duly sworn, was
11 examined and testified as follows:

12 -----

13 MS. YOUNG: This is my first meeting that
14 I've attended. I moved here a little over two
15 years ago. My son is a high school student
16 here at Morrisville High. And from
17 kindergarten -- actually, kindergarten through
18 sixth grade, he attended Ewing public school,
19 where the teacher-to-child ratio was about 27
20 to 2.

21 I think it is despicable, despicable, that
22 this Board decided to let the students of M.R.
23 Reiter sit in that school while it was a
24 ticking time bomb, a ticking time bomb, which
25 placed our students in that school in danger.

1 The fact that the furnace went on the
2 weekend was a blessing, a blessing, because any
3 of those children could have been hurt. And
4 one of those children is my nephew who's in
5 second grade.

6 And it's ridiculous that in this school
7 year he's gone from one school to another
8 document, to a TCU. And then where is he going
9 to be next year? There's no answer to that.

10 The fact that now you've said two cycles
11 have gone through, the furnaces should have
12 been fixed and they weren't, tick, tick, tick.
13 Tick, tick, tick. Any of those students could
14 have been hurt.

15 Back to the teacher-to-student ratio. I
16 pulled my son out of Ewing public school
17 because of that, and I decided that Morrisville
18 School District would be better for my son
19 because of the teacher-to-child ratio.

20 You said the drop in student enrollment
21 has dropped. But for me for a student who was
22 in that scenario and that situation, that's
23 good for me. My son is getting a better
24 education in this borough because of that
25 ratio, where he seems to be a better priority

1 than what was there where one teacher is
2 standing in the front of the room saying pick a
3 side of the room and get the directions off the
4 blackboard that you see. Tick, tick, tick. It
5 was despicable.

6 -----

7 TIM McCLEARY, having been duly sworn, was
8 examined and testified as follows:

9 -----

10 MR. McCLEARY: Tim McCleary, 53 Delaware
11 Avenue. Father of two students, both who were
12 attending M.R. Reiter when the explosion
13 happened.

14 My son is in preschool. My daughter is in
15 second grade. Since being moved up to the high
16 school, she has been struggling in school, has
17 not been doing well. She is in an
18 uncomfortable environment there.

19 With being moved to Grandview and trailers
20 possibly in a few weeks, I can assure you that
21 that situation is not going to change. It's
22 going to be an environment that's not conducive
23 for her learning and she's going to continue to
24 struggle. That's a big concern for my wife and
25 I.

1 I'm also concerned that we don't know what
2 the plan is. The community here deserves to
3 know what your plan is, what your long-term
4 plan is, not just bits and pieces. We would
5 like to hear it direct from the Board, not from
6 a newspaper, not from rumors. We want to know
7 the truth. We want to know what is going on.

8 We want a plan doesn't include farming out
9 our 9th through 12th graders to other School
10 Districts. That's a nonacceptable plan to us.
11 These other districts are not obligated to take
12 our students nor are they in any position to do
13 so.

14 All the districts in this area are looking
15 at cutting costs right now in light of the
16 current economic downturn. I work in education
17 and I'm very well aware of that.

18 Accepting our students by these other
19 districts they'll increase their costs and
20 overburden their already crowded schools.

21 Many of these districts are already
22 anticipating increase in enrollment due to
23 parents no longer able to afford private
24 school. They're not in a position to take 300
25 more students or however many are in 9th

1 through 12th in this district. It is not
2 something they can afford. We're pinning all
3 of our hopes on the charity of another
4 district, and that is clearly not the answer.

5 Nor is the answer to cram our students and
6 teachers like sardines in smaller and smaller
7 spaces. Reiter is not without its problems;
8 and as has been mentioned, it is probably the
9 school here with the most problems. We
10 understand that.

11 But we need to realize that any viable
12 solution is going to cost us money. Proper
13 solution doesn't mean just cramming more
14 students into a building, putting more and more
15 students in there, and not doing anything to
16 address the real problems and address the
17 educational needs of our children.

18 It's certainly not the best time for these
19 costs when our students require safe, stable,
20 and quality education. We can't just keep
21 moving them around like they're cattle. They
22 need to be in a stable environment, a place
23 where they feel safe, where they feel
24 comfortable.

25 We need to be thinking about the education

1 of our students and not just how we can save
2 money for this community. That's a concern as
3 well.

4 But more pressing is that we provide our
5 students with the quality education and a way
6 for them to learn where they can excel and
7 succeed in our society. Thank you.

8 -----

9 GAYLE HAUG, having been duly sworn, was
10 examined and testified as follows:

11 -----

12 MS. HAUG: Good evening. I just have a
13 couple concerns here. I'll read them out.

14 Some concerns I would like addressed by
15 the School Board regarding the possible closing
16 of M.R. Reiter Elementary School.

17 If the insurance company is willing to pay
18 for all repairs required due to the furnace
19 incident, why would there be a more urgent need
20 than there has been in the past to close the
21 school if these repairs are made?

22 Isn't it conceivable that the building
23 should remain open until an acceptable
24 long-term plan is established?

25 According to the Bucks County Courier

1 Times, Mr. Hellmann's plan is to house K
2 through 8 in the high school and send the high
3 school students to another district. Yet
4 Mr. Hellmann and the Board have no idea if this
5 plan is really feasible to another district or
6 even to the people of Morrisville at this point
7 in time.

8 Please don't charge forward with only
9 Mr. Hellmann's plan and close doors that can
10 not be reopened should his idea be
11 unattainable.

12 What will the ultimate effect of closing
13 the school have on the PreK program? Will we
14 be able to house the program in another school?
15 It would be unacceptable to see the district
16 lose or waste a grant from the state to provide
17 PreK due to poor planning on the part of the
18 district. I have the same concern about the
19 full-day kindergarten program should M.R.
20 Reiter be closed and room at other facilities
21 become scarce for whatever reason.

22 Three. There are many concerns relating
23 to what will become of this property once the
24 school is closed. If the building has to be
25 closed, it is absolutely critical that the

1 property be sold.

2 The proceeds from the sale of the property
3 belong to the School District and should be
4 used to help pay for remodeling or repairs to
5 other school facilities.

6 I am concerned that the School Board
7 majority may decide to make a park out of the
8 property rather than sell it. This is not a
9 realistic option when the district is in such
10 dire need of funds for repair.

11 Four. If M.R. Reiter is closed, will the
12 Board consider reopening the Manor Park School?
13 I certainly don't know if this is the answer to
14 some or all of our problems but it definitely
15 needs to be considered.

16 I had thought the lease of Manor Park
17 School to Head Start could not be terminated,
18 but this is not true. According to the lease
19 agreement, item number 20 of the lease
20 agreement, 20B: This lease may be terminated
21 by the landlord during any calendar year by
22 giving written notice to tenant on or before
23 March 31st of any year indicating the
24 landlord's intention to terminate this lease.
25 Notice must be sent, as per the lease

1 agreement, in writing by certified mail. In
2 order to terminate this lease agreement,
3 landlord may pay tenants the following:

4 Number 1. Tenant's actual costs less
5 depreciation for any fixtures, equipment,
6 improvements and appurtenances attached to or
7 built into the premises that will remain part
8 of the premises at the termination of the lease
9 agreement.

10 Number 2. 40 percent of all amounts
11 tenant has paid in rent to landlord.

12 If notice is given, the lease will be
13 terminated at the end of that calendar year,
14 provided landlord makes payment to tenant prior
15 to the end of that year as required above.

16 Landlord's right to terminate expires and ends
17 on December 31st, 2010. If landlord has not
18 exercised its right to terminate by that date
19 on the terms set forth above, landlord forever
20 loses its right to terminate this lease
21 unilaterally. However, this does not affect
22 the landlord's right to terminate this lease if
23 tenant is in default. If landlord exercises
24 its right to terminate this lease, tenant will
25 leave space in the same condition it found

1 space, less reasonable wear and tear. If
2 landlord terminates this lease agreement,
3 tenant shall have no further rights in the
4 premises, including any right to purchase the
5 premises.

6 According to what I just read, the School
7 District has the right to terminate this lease
8 until December 31, 2010. The minimum cost to
9 the district is 40 percent of all amounts
10 tenant has paid in rent to landlord to date.

11 Page 1 per the agreement, the tenant
12 agrees to pay to the District \$50,000 upon the
13 execution of the lease. That was in 1999.

14 MR. HELLMANN: Four minutes.

15 MS. HAUG: And 27,632 on each January 2.
16 This would be a total of 298,688 on
17 January 2nd, 2009, of which 40 percent or
18 119,000 will be due to the tenant.

19 In addition, the district will owe the
20 tenant the actual costs, less depreciation, for
21 any fixtures.

22 Manor Park School is the newest of all the
23 Morrisville schools and contains at least eight
24 classrooms. I am told that Head Start only
25 uses two of those classrooms for the children

1 I work in this school every single day. I
2 would challenge any one of you -- architects,
3 with all due respect -- to come into that
4 building and see how we're supposed to properly
5 educate these children crammed into rooms.

6 Kindergarten is eating in classrooms.
7 Cramming 80 children in a room only made for a
8 hundred to eat lunch in. Now to most people
9 saying what is she complaining about; there's
10 still room for 20 more children.

11 Come into that room. Come see what it's
12 like. It's not acceptable. We can do better.
13 I don't want my taxes to go up either. We're,
14 you know, some months just making it through.
15 But there's a bigger picture. Okay.

16 The modules, that I see out there, to me
17 are not acceptable. What I view that are
18 supposed to be for four classrooms, in my
19 opinion, should only be for two. One of them I
20 don't even see windows in, only doors.

21 I understand you need to use them as an
22 emergency situation, but they're not acceptable
23 for anything long term.

24 I would like -- if we need to close a
25 building, I would like to see the proper

1 renovations done to a building or a brand new
2 elementary school built.

3 You know, I believe that most of the Board
4 got elected because people were against the K
5 through 12 idea of a building. But I don't
6 believe that they didn't want anything for
7 their children. Or they wanted something
8 better.

9 I have three teenagers in this high
10 school. I have a junior, who shares with me
11 often his concerns after spending three years
12 building his academic résumé to go on to places
13 like University of Michigan and other schools,
14 wondering if he's going to get shipped out in
15 his senior year and what is that going to mean
16 to him to get his transcripts out.

17 These are not acceptable, but neither is a
18 building that is unsafe for our children. If
19 you're saying M.R. Reiter doesn't meet
20 everything that we need for our children, then
21 we do need to do something about it. But just
22 shoving them into buildings unrenovated
23 properly is not the answer either.

24 I'm sorry that we didn't have a bigger
25 turnout here tonight. I'm not sure that the

1 people understand the importance of what
2 happening.

3 MR. HELLMANN: Four minutes.

4 MS. VELEZ: I will submit written
5 testimony. And Mr. Hellmann, I would hope that
6 you would reconsider to remove the statements
7 you have made. Thank you.

8 -----

9 SHARON HUGHES, having been duly sworn, was
10 examined and testified as follows:

11 -----

12 SHARON HUGHES: My name is Sharon Hughes.
13 I live at 121 Mercer Avenue. I'm a life-long
14 resident of Morrisville. I graduated on that
15 stage too many years ago.

16 I am sorry there was an explosion in the
17 heater at M.R. Reiter but stuff happens we
18 don't plan on, and this School Board inherited
19 that heater and that problem.

20 I also would like to know exactly what
21 happened, why the explosion happened exactly.
22 I hope that somebody investigates that and
23 tells us.

24 I hope M.R. Reiter will be fit for
25 occupancy and continue as a school, but that

1 depends on what may have been released and gone
2 throughout the school during the explosion in
3 the boiler room.

4 Now the safety of the students and
5 teachers is paramount, even more important than
6 it was before. This was a 50-year old heater
7 that this School Board inherited. So who knows
8 what may have been used in its construction and
9 went throughout the building.

10 Health and safety of our students and
11 teachers again is the most important issue now.
12 All decisions should start from there.

13 But M.R. Reiter is a larger school
14 centrally located and it's two stories tall --
15 two and-a-half. I believe probably it can be
16 heated more efficiently than Grandview.
17 Probably for less. So there might be a savings
18 in the future. Grandview has three less
19 classrooms and has more exposure to the
20 weather, so it would probably cost more to
21 heat.

22 Obviously, M.R. Reiter was
23 well-constructed with some of the walls 2 feet
24 thick in places. I believe handicap
25 accessibility can be retrofitted, as can water

1 incursion be addressed.

2 We were told Capital View was in terrible
3 shape 20 years ago or so, so it was leased.
4 But it's still in use as Magic Cottage.

5 I trust this School Board to make
6 measured, well-thought-out decisions, because I
7 know their priorities are, first, safety of our
8 students and providing the best education that
9 this district can, while working to make the
10 district affordable by efficient, financial
11 policies and lowering taxes, while no classes
12 or sports have been cut and tests scores are
13 up.

14 I would just like to say congratulations
15 to Laurie Ruffing, our acting elementary
16 principal, who has done an exemplary job during
17 this crisis and to the teachers and the
18 administration who have managed to meet the
19 many challenges that have been presented
20 themselves.

21 But mostly to the students who continue to
22 do their job, which is to learn. Even this
23 experience is teaching about life's problems
24 and how we work together to solve them.

25 I've been speaking to one of the aides who

1 said that the children continue to learn and to
2 work hard.

3 Tom Brokaw today said: Across the
4 country, school districts are going to have to
5 start thinking about consolidating for the
6 economies of scale.

7 I think the nation is starting to
8 recognize that smaller school districts are
9 struggling. I don't know what the future may
10 hold, but I believe that across the country
11 there will be consolidation of districts. And
12 that may be in our future. Thank you.

13 -----

14 DIANE HUGHES, having been duly sworn, was
15 examined and testified as follows:

16 -----

17 DIANE HUGHES: Good evening. I do have
18 some questions.

19 I understand that there's some structural
20 problems, some cracking, in M.R. Reiter. And
21 I'm assuming that there are none at Grandview
22 because I didn't hear that. But that would
23 be -- whatever the case would be, it will be
24 stated.

25 Also, that there's water problems in M.R.

1 Reiter. And again, I'm assuming that there are
2 none in Grandview but I would like that to be
3 stated one way or the other.

4 I know when I was a kid, all up here was
5 pretty swampy, but I had no idea that there was
6 a water problem in M.R. Reiter, so perhaps I
7 had no idea that there's water problems in
8 Grandview.

9 I would also like the Board to consider
10 cost versus cost in terms of M.R. Reiter
11 costing \$4 million to bring it up to code
12 versus the Grandview, two thousand --
13 2 million -- what did I say? M.R. Reiter,
14 4 million, did I say that? Okay. Grandview
15 2 million.

16 But then once you get into Grandview,
17 you're going to have to make it bigger. And I
18 think it's going to be harder to heat. So I
19 think that perhaps looking into the -- it may
20 be cost-efficient to do 4 million; it might not
21 be, but please look at that.

22 I'm not crazy about a K through 12. I
23 never was. I really don't like that idea. I'm
24 hoping actually that M.R. Reiter can be brought
25 to life again as an elementary school. It's

1 centrally located. It's bigger. It was built
2 later, which means that the materials that were
3 used were better. I think it would be easier
4 to heat and it has been working efficiently.
5 However, I'm not an expert, so I'm going to
6 have to rely on experts to tell me the best way
7 to go.

8 And also, along with that to answer my
9 questions, I'm very sensitive when it comes to
10 smell, so I can get headaches. And I
11 understand that for years M.R. Reiter was
12 having bad smells. With the Sandy Gibson
13 Board, I asked them to please fix that
14 heater -- because I empathize with the students
15 and I empathize with the teachers -- no matter
16 what direction you're going into, please
17 address that heater, and nobody addressed it.

18 When the new Board was elected, the first
19 meeting I said: I know you don't know exactly
20 what you're going to do. You're going to have
21 to make some big plans. But before you do
22 anything, please address that heater. And I
23 didn't really see any change.

24 I know that I was very encouraged when
25 Mr. Hellmann, at a meeting, came to -- I think

1 he probably made the motion: Please let's look
2 at that heater. Let's look at the safety of
3 that heater. Let's address that heater before
4 we do anything else.

5 He lost that motion three to three. The
6 three people that voted to please address that
7 heater, probably close to a year ago, Brenda,
8 Mr. Farrell and Bill voted yes, let's do that.
9 Mr. Kemp, Mrs. Reithmeyer and Mr. Frankenfield
10 voted no. So it was three to three. It didn't
11 happen. And I'm really sorry it didn't. And
12 thank you for listening to me.

13 -----

14 PETER EISENGREIN, having been duly sworn, was
15 examined and testified as follows:

16 -----

17 MR. EISENGREIN: Good evening. Peter
18 Eisengrein, 160 West Hendrickson.

19 I would like to start tonight with
20 clarification on Dr. Yonson's comment about the
21 PAC committee. I was part of that committee
22 and the recommendation was not to close the
23 building. The recommendation was to keep at
24 least one; which means possibly closing one,
25 possibly not.

1 Beyond that, the people in this town are
2 not necessarily against closing this building,
3 I don't think. The fact of the matter is, you
4 know, closing it will probably save some money
5 or renovating can be costly. People don't want
6 to spend money needlessly.

7 But the problem is the Board has yet to
8 present the comprehensive plan on how to
9 address this.

10 How would you fit all of the students in
11 two buildings, or possibly even one, and not
12 affect their education? Safety, then
13 education, and then cost, in that order.

14 So the problem is in our current
15 situation, I understand this is an emergency
16 situation. But again, going back to safety,
17 education and cost, the first two -- the safety
18 and education -- have been compromised through
19 this.

20 And by keeping two buildings, unless
21 something changes, unless you have a plan how
22 you're going to deal with it, those two things
23 will continue to be compromised.

24 I'm speaking about classrooms in hallways.
25 I'm talking about exceeding the limits of

1 numbers of people in all-purpose rooms.
2 Multiple classes in the same room. Special ed
3 is being kept in the principal's office. These
4 are the things I'm talking about.

5 Now, if you can present a plan to this
6 town and show us how you're going to fit all of
7 these kids in one or two buildings, and do it
8 in a way that's going to be safe and is going
9 to promote strong education -- this town has
10 made great strides in the last several years
11 about education. We need to keep it going.

12 So if you can do that, I think you'll get
13 the people behind you. So far, this has not
14 been shown. There's been no plan. There's
15 too many questions. And therefore, this
16 hearing is premature. Thank you.

17 -----

18 MELISSA PETRO, having been duly sworn, was
19 examined and testified as follows:

20 -----

21 MS. PETRO: Melissa Petro, 515 Hamilton
22 Boulevard. I just have two things to say.

23 The staff has been wonderful in doing
24 everything in their power to make the children
25 comfortable. But the thing is, kids in the

1 hallway is ridiculous. My daughter took
2 pictures of the kids sitting out there with
3 their books with their aide, and seventh and
4 eighth graders are changing classes.

5 So she told me that and I told her
6 tomorrow to take a picture, which she has. I
7 think that that's disgusting. Sitting on the
8 floor is not a classroom, and in the hallways
9 while there's a possibility they can be
10 trampled on.

11 It's not the staff's problem. If this
12 would have been taken care of, we would never
13 have to worry about this so-called emergency in
14 the first place. That's all.

15 MR. FITZPATRICK: This public hearing is
16 concluded. I want to thank everybody who took
17 time tonight to give testimony -- it's part of
18 the record -- especially the members of the
19 public. And remind the public that you have
20 until Monday at three o'clock to submit
21 additional written testimony. That's not a
22 requirement of the school code but it's a
23 decision that was made by the School Board to
24 give everybody the opportunity to provide
25 public comment and time to do so.

1 So with that, I will turn this matter back
2 over to the School Board president to adjourn
3 the meeting.

4 MR. HELLMANN: We adjourn.

5 -----

6 (Deposition was concluded.)

7 -----

8 C E R T I F I C A T I O N

9 I hereby certify that the
10 proceedings and testimony by and before me
11 are contained fully and accurately in the Notes
12 of Testimony, and that the foregoing is a true and
13 correct transcript of the same.

14

15

16

Lynda Scheswohl, Notary Public

17

18

19

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21

22

23

24

25

1/29/09 – Public Hearing to permanently close M.R. Reiter Elementary School

Gayle Haug

260 Harper Ave

Morrisville, PA

Some concerns that I'd like addressed by the school board regarding the possible closing of MR Reiter Elementary School

1 – If the insurance company is willing to pay for all repairs required due to the furnace incident why would there be a more urgent need than there has been in the past to close the school if these repairs are made? Isn't it conceivable that the building should remain open until an acceptable long term plan is established. According to the BCCT Mr. Hellman's plan is to house K-8 in the high school and send the HS students to another district. Yet Mr. Hellman and the board have no idea if this plan is really feasible to another district or even to the people of Morrisville at this point in time. Please don't charge forward with only Mr. Hellman's plan and close doors that can not be reopened should his idea be unattainable.

2 – What is the ultimate affect of closing the school going to have on the PreK program? Will we be able to house the program in another school? It would be unacceptable to see the district lose/waste a grant from the state to provide PreK due to poor planning on the part of the district. I have the same concern about the Full day Kindergarten program should MR Reiter be closed and room at other facilities become scarce (for whatever reason).

3 – There are many concerns relating to what will become of this property once the school is closed. If the building has to be closed it is absolutely critical that the property be SOLD. The proceeds from the sale of the property belong to the school district and should be used to help pay for remodeling/repairs to other school facilities. I am concerned that the school board majority may decide to make a park out of the property rather than sell it. This is not a realistic option when the district is in such a dire need of funds for repairs.

4 – If MR Reiter is closed will the board consider reopening the Manor Park School? I certainly don't know if this is the answer to some or all of our problems but it definitely needs to be considered. I had thought the lease of Manor Park School to Head Start could not be terminated but this is not true. According to the lease agreement (see #20B of the lease agreement attached) the School District has the right to terminate this lease until December 31, 2010. The minimum cost to the district is 40% of all amounts tenant has paid in rent to landlord to date. Per page 1 of the agreement the tenant agrees to pay d the district \$50,000

upon the execution of the lease and \$27,632 on each January 2nd, thereafter. That would be a total of \$298,688 as of January 2, 2009. Of which 40% or \$119,475 would be due to the tenant. In addition the district would owe the tenant the actual costs, less depreciation, for any fixtures, equipment, ...etc as state in # 20 of the agreement (see attached).

The Manor Park School is the newest of all of the Morrisville schools and contains at least 8 classrooms. I am told that Head Start only uses two of those classrooms for the children they serve. If MR Reiter is closed and sold the district can use some of the proceeds to obtain the Manor Park school.

- 5 This is a meeting that has addressed ^{only} the structures in the School district. What is your specific plan if any, for placement of ^{the} children, and where can we see this plan? How much square footage do we need for current student level? Where do these kids go now & why are we using 3 schools if we really don't need them? What is the expansion contingent for future student levels?

LEASE AGREEMENT

THIS LEASE AGREEMENT ("Lease"), is made this ____ day of _____, 1999 by and between the School District of the Borough of Morrisville, a school district of the third class, organized and existing pursuant to the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ("Landlord") and Bucks County Head Start, Inc., a non-profit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ("Tenant").

WITNESSETH:

1. BACKGROUND

Tenant wishes to occupy approximately 16,300 square feet (including multipurpose room and basement), and exclusively use the building and land, formerly known as Manor Park Elementary School. The lot size for this property is 1.69 acres. The Premises is located on Penn Avenue in Morrisville, Bucks County, PA. The Landlord wishes to lease the Premises to the Tenant on the terms and conditions set forth herein.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants contained herein, and intending to be legally bound hereby, Landlord hereby leases to Tenant, and Tenant hereby takes from Landlord, the Leased Premises as per the terms and conditions set forth below.

2. TERM

This Lease is for a period of twenty (20) years, commencing on May 1, 1999 and ending on December 31, 2018.

3. MINIMUM RENT

At the execution of this Lease Agreement, the Tenant will pay Landlord \$50,000. Thereafter, on or before January 2nd of each succeeding calendar year, beginning on January 2, 2000 and ending on January 2, 2018, Tenant will pay Landlord; the sum of \$27,632. This annual installment payment of \$27,632 is due and payable on January 2nd of each year this Lease Agreement is in effect. As per the Agreement, the final annual payment is to be paid on January 2, 2018.

provides at least 8 classrooms

3/1/99 50,000
1/2/00 1/2/08 =

27632 X 9 = 248,688

298.688 X 40% = 119.475

20
damage to the Premises will be repaired prior to the end of the calendar year. The Landlord is given express permission to enter upon the Premises to ensure compliance with this paragraph. All fixtures, equipment, improvements and appurtenances attached to or built into the Premises at the commencement or during the term of the Lease, whether or not by or at the expense of Tenant, shall be and remain part of the Premises and shall not be removed by Tenant. If the Lease is terminated by Tenant, Tenant forever loses and forfeits any rights as contained in the Agreement to purchase said Premises. Tenant also acknowledges and agrees that it has no right to seek reimbursement or repayment of any amounts it paid as rent under the Lease Agreement.

B. This Lease may be terminated by the Landlord during any calendar year by giving written notice to Tenant on or before March 31st of any year indicating the Landlord's intention to terminate this Lease. Notice must be sent as per this Lease Agreement in writing by certified mail. In order to terminate this Lease Agreement, Landlord must pay tenant the following:

- less depreciation, *PHS*
- (1) Tenant's actual costs, for any fixtures, equipment, improvements and appurtenances attached to or built into the Premises that will remain part of the Premises at the termination of the Lease Agreement;
 - (2) Forty percent (40%) of all amounts Tenant has paid in rent to Landlord.

If notice is given, the Lease will terminate at the end of that calendar year, provided Landlord makes payment to Tenant prior to the end of that year as required above. Landlord's right to terminate expires and ends on December 31, 2010. If Landlord has not exercised its right to terminate by that date on the terms set forth above, Landlord forever loses its rights to terminate this Lease unilaterally. However, this does not affect Landlord's right to terminate this Lease if Tenant is in default. If Landlord exercises its right to terminate this Lease, Tenant will leave space in the same condition it found space, less reasonable wear and tear. If Landlord terminates this Lease Agreement, Tenant shall have no further rights in the Premises, including any right to purchase the Premises.

21. DEFAULT BY TENANT

A. The following events shall be deemed to be events of

have
unf /
3/31/10
to term

Mrs. Carol J. Bargery
613 Taft Avenue
Morrisville, PA 19067

February 1, 2009

Dear Morrisville School Board Members;

I should like to express a few of my ideas about the possibility of your closing the M.R. Reiter School.

First, why not use the million plus amount of money from the insurance company along with some of the seven million dollars that we have in our budget toward the renovation of M.R. Reiter?

I was at your last meeting when the architect was selling the idea to not renovate. He is a business man and it certainly would be in his best interest not to renovate, but possibly try selling us on the idea, if not today down the road, to build a **new** school. Is this not the same architectural and engineering firm that had been selected to build the new K-12 school as I have been told? The people of Morrisville voted against this with the thought that **this** school board would act quickly with at least the most needed repairs. We saw what happened.

This town has drawn people to move here and buy homes here because it is small and we have offered more of a one-on-one relationship between teachers and students. Our children are our most valuable assets. We must think what is best for them, not just for today or tomorrow, but for years to come. This is part of the problem here in Morrisville. Had we thought ahead and maintained our schools, we wouldn't be in this mess.

I think the renovation of M.R. Reiter even with all of it's ills would make the most sense. We wouldn't need to raise taxes, at least for awhile. We could possibly sell Grandview School. Send K-8th grade to the high school and send 9th thru 12th to M.R. Reiter.

When the people of this community wanted a playground in Williamson Park, they all got together and made a playground. Maybe if you would be more open and forthright with the community the community would reach out, and when American's work together there is nothing we can't do.

Please take a long look at our problem and think about our future. Our children are being hurt every day in so many ways. Not having any of their after school 21st Century programs is just one. Might we not lose that so much needed and enjoyed grant?

Without our having schools, **not modular units**, no one will want to move into Morrisville.

Isn't it about time we unite as a unit and work for our children and town? There are many ways in which we could help the schools make money. Look around at some of our neighboring communities and what they do. Everyone must work together and we can and will succeed.

Most Sincerely,

Carol J. Bargery

Mrs. Carol J. Bargery

P.S. I suggest we have a referendum on the closing of M.R. Reiter and also on any other schools you might decide to close or sell.

I want to thank our solicitor, Mr Michael Fitzpatrick in suggesting to send our written comments,

To The Morrisville School Board,

My name is Rita Lee Bratton, my family & I have lived in Morrisville for almost 10 years. Our children have been attending the Morrisville school district for 2 years for our 2 oldest daughters and 1 year for our youngest daughter. My husband & I enjoy living in Morrisville and take great pride in our home and community. Our children were attending a private school in Bensalem but when it suddenly closed down we had two choices: 1) send them to another private school or 2) send them to public school. After praying and meeting with the principal of the private school and meeting with the principals of Morrisville School District, our decision was made to send them to Morrisville Public School. We know we made the right decision and have no regrets.

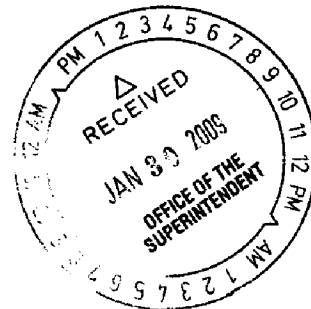
Our daughters are getting a quality education because the teaching staff and administration are dedicated. However, our hearts are very heavy over the fact that the current school board has no vested interested in the children that attend Morrisville public school. It is sad to see our children crammed into classes and moved from building to building. This is taking a toll on the children & the staff. Not once has the school board come during the day to see how the children are doing or for that matter how the teachers are doing. I just cannot believe that your hearts can be that cold. I don't want to believe it. I want to believe that you really care and that you are vested in education. My husband & I pay our taxes so our children can live and be educated in a beautiful small but caring community. This is what Morrisville is about. I want your heart to be touched by these children. I want them to know that they are cared for and not just by us the parents but by the people who are making decisions for the education.

I don't know what your goals or plans are for this school district, but think hard and if you believe in the power of prayer. Pray before you make any decisions that could effect us all.

Sincerely,



Rita Lee Bratton





Admin Area

Jeanne Corrigan | Feb 2, 2009 3:43 PM

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Feedback Information

CATHY DUFFY

Email:

ken marie @comcast .net

** Note - this email address is not valid!!

Phone: 215-295-7031

Send this to the attention of:

cathy duffy's Comments:

it is a shame that i have to sell my home in morrisville because the people we eleted to this new school board are being forced to spend more money on our schools just to try to keep happy those rich sour grape losers from the previous boards and their rich cohorts who think the town people have to supply their children with over the top activities. do these same parents provide for them at home like that? SO MUCH MONEY DOLED OUT TO THE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPAL AND OTHERS FOR SUCH A SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS. WHAT TYPE OF LOWLIFE UPPER CLASSMEN ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT COMING INTO CONTACT WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN? YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO ALOT DUE TO THE LACK OF MORAL PARENTAL AUTHORITY. IN THAT CASE BY ALL MEANS MAKE SURE THE TEACHERS ETC. WHO MONITOR ALL OF THEM DURING THE DAY KEEP THEM IN LINE AND YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM BEING IN THE SAME BUILDING. LASTLY,THE SCHOOL TAX SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE REVISED ,WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND AND THIS TOWN OFFERS NOTHING INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES SOOO I WILL BE GLAD TO MOVE ON

Note: cathy duffy did not request a response.

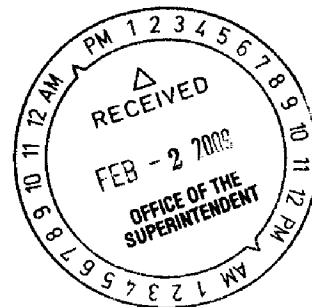
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Written comment and testimony on closing of
M. R. Reiter Elementary School, Morrisville PA

Our family chose to live in Morrisville because of the great potential we saw here and the great school system we have experienced. Strong schools build strong communities. A strong school district is defined by quality, efficiency, communication and community. Schools build local economies by preparing young people and attracting jobs of the future. Schools become the hearts of their communities and provide a place for all of us to come together.

Good schools can be found everywhere - so long as parents and communities are willing to work for them. We all have a stake in quality education, even those who don't have children in school. Providing our children with a high quality education is an investment in our future, and an investment in our community. Our children are our greatest assets and we need to provide them with the best educational opportunities we can.

It is important that our schools run as efficiently as possible and utilize community resources wisely. Our school district needs to operate in a manner that is both beneficial to the school and the community. The district should make decisions based on long term planning and priorities, including financial stability and oversight.

This board has shown time and again that it does not act with a publicly discussed, debated, and enacted long-term strategic plan in place. It acts in fits and starts without an overarching goal. At this moment, as we debate the closure of M. R. Reiter Elementary, the board is actively seeking to tuition out grades 9-12 and is also spending money to refurbish Grandview Elementary, a school it will close if a tuitioning out plan is successful. Clearly, these opposing avenues of action point toward separate and different goals.

The high school, in its current configuration, is not suited to be a school for the younger students. Business Manager Paul DeAngelo has reported that the current bathroom and play area mandates required by Pennsylvania state law for younger students cannot be fulfilled without renovation. We already know that the younger grades cannot be completely segregated from the older grades. Yet, renovation is scheduled to start on the high school this summer. Will it be a grade 5-12 building or a K-8 building? No one knows, yet we are spending vast amounts out of a dwindling bank account without a coordinated and defined goal in mind.

Communication is vital for success and for building trust. Building strong, positive relationships based on open communication and trust is essential to building strong schools and in bringing the community together. This board has acted with clear disregard for the input of the community, even to the point of needlessly shutting off public comment at the January 28, 2009 business meeting.

Accordingly, I am requesting that the following questions be answered and the following actions be taken:

- 1) Provide the public with a copy of the written feasibility studies that have looked at the current high school being transformed into a grade 5-12 building and a K-8

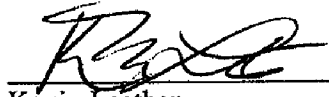
Written comment and testimony on closing of
M. R. Reiter Elementary School, Morrisville PA

building, and describing where these building configurations are similar or different and the specific renovation actions that can safely be taken because they are identical in both plans. If a feasibility study is not available, copies of notes and other strategic planning should be provided. If a plan or notes are not available, then please provide the reason for the lack of a strategic plan and the planned remediation actions to ensure that an overarching strategy has been discussed and evaluated.

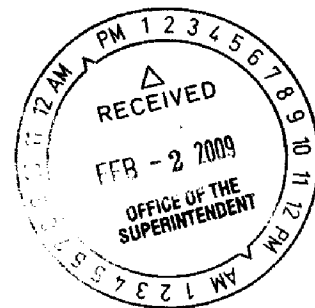
- 2) Provide the public with a copy of the strategic plan discussing the closure and sale of M. R. Reiter Elementary school. The items that it should cover are the remediation of contamination from the December 13, 2008 furnace explosion and the long term impact this would have on the salability of the existing building; the plans for a quick sale as well as the contingency plans if a protracted sales period is encountered; a full disclosure of the land use discussions that have occurred with local, county, state, and/or federal officials, as well as private citizens and/or companies, and a comparison between the differing suggested post-educational uses so that informed review can occur. If a strategic study is not available, copies of notes and other strategic planning should be provided. If a plan or notes are not available, then please provide the reason for the lack of a strategic plan and the planned remediation actions to ensure that an overarching strategy has been discussed and evaluated.
- 3) If it exists, provide the public with a copy of the "six point plan" that Mr. Hellmann has alluded to on several occasions. Since it has not been shared with the public, provide details on notes and/or discussions that occurred prior to 02 February 2009 that involved using the "six point plan" as a district strategy and plan for action including, but not limited to, the closure and/or renovation of M. R. Reiter, the closure and/or renovation of Grandview, the renovation of the high school, and the tuitioning out of grades 9-12.
- 4) If it exists, school administration, state government, and/or federal government studies and/or estimates on the expected enrollment in each grade in Morrisville district schools. If these estimates are not available, copies of notes and other estimates should be provided. If a plan or notes are not available, then please provide the reason for the lack of a strategic plan and the planned remediation actions to ensure that an overarching strategy has been discussed and evaluated.
- 5) If it exists, school administration, state government, and/or federal government studies and/or estimates of known, scheduled, and/or expected increased school budget costs over the next five budget cycles and how school closures and/or renovations will impact these estimates. If a plan or notes are not available, then please provide the reason for the lack of a strategic plan and the planned remediation actions to ensure that an overarching strategy has been discussed and evaluated.
- 6) If it exists, school administration, local government, county, government, and/or state government studies and/or estimates of known the applicability of federal, state, local codes on a renovated school building including known grandfathering and/or the loss of grandfathering. If a plan or notes are not available, then please provide the reason for the lack of a strategic plan and the planned remediation actions to ensure that an overarching strategy has been discussed and evaluated.

Written comment and testimony on closing of
M. R. Reiter Elementary School, Morrisville PA

Community involvement is our number one tool to build a strong school district. Working together, we can build and maintain a community based on strong values and our own sense of identity. As a team, we can overcome the obstacles we face and build a sense of pride in our schools and in our community.



Kevin Leather
480 Hamilton Blvd
Morrisville, PA 19067



Please Someone address this ↓ ^{page 1}

I am writing this in a very upset and concerned state. I have no trust in who reads this will care or do anything about these issues. But I do have trust in God to make things right for the children in Morrisville. I am begging someone to stand up and help these poor kids and put safety and education before taxes or money, money, money!!! I do not want my wonderful child thrown around from a run down unsafe school (reiter) to a High School library, with walls made out of a divider! How insane is this - 6 and 7 years old in high school size desks!! NO outside recess since before Christmas its now feb 2!!! We were told 5 days of this non sense - "a temporary fix" and now look at this mess. These kids are going to be behind in their grade level! Now You want to Put my

child in a beat up windowless trailer! This is unsafe! 4 classes in 1 trailer? Is this legal? Do you know how bad these trailers will smell with no fresh air and all their lunch boxes etc!! How will all these kids fit in Grandview? Its way pass the capacity in the lunch room? How about assemblies? These kids lives were and still are so disrupted its a sin!! Please someone have a heart and start doing for the children! Now, once again more, talk about farming out high schoolers! Stop we don't want our children anywhere, but in the town we live! As a parent and a tax payer I Demand to know what is in store for my children's Education and most importantly their proper safety?! Whats happening to this school district is absolutely disgusting and a disgrace! Someone help these →

Kids please! It is the school board we are supposed to be able to count on! We are not supposed to be scared to death of your next heartless move!! How do you sleep knowing you do this to our kids education? How? How do you sleep knowing you risked our babies lives knowing how unsafe. Reiter was before school even started in sept???. We deserve someone to help our kids not hurt them!!!!



from
 Tammi Bresnen
 571 Elbridge Rd
 Monroeville, PA 15146

Questions/Issues Pertaining to M.R. Reiter Closure

1. What's next if M.R. Reiter is closed? If closing M.R. Reiter is the done deal it appears to be, then what will happen to that property? Sale, re-construction, demolition, conversion to open space, etc.?
2. Why does the public find out most of its information about the Board from the local newspaper? What steps if any will the Board take to significantly improve the transparency of its actions in the future?
3. Why hasn't the Board or Mr. Fitzpatrick asked parents their opinions about his 7-month quest to farm out our High School students?
4. What was the point of having Community Action Plan (CAP) meetings if this School Board makes its decisions without the advice of parents and residents?
5. How is this Board different from the Board headed by Dr. Sandy Gibson? Isn't this Board doing many of same exact negative things it accused the Gibson Board of?
6. What are the elements of the six (6) point plan Mr. Hellmann has mentioned in public, but about which the public has no information? If the exact number of points in the plan is known, it must be relatively detailed. When will this plan be shared with the public? When will the plan be voted on by the Board?
7. Has the Board decided that the assets of the school system (buildings, land, borrowed money) are things to be cashed out rather than invested in?
8. Following this logic, aren't teacher, administrators and students a drain on taxpayer monies? Doesn't this Board have its duties completely backwards? Aren't they supposed to invest in the students and not cash out whatever they can liquidate?
9. How long does the Board intend to let M.R. Reiter sit vacant if the Board can't sell it at a reasonable price?
10. What actions will the Board take to prevent M. R. Reiter from becoming a blighted eyesore if it sits vacant?