

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
November 13, 2006
Walnut Street School – All Purpose Room
7:00 P.M.

1. OPENING STATEMENT

The meeting of the Board of Education, City of Woodbury, was held on the above date. Mr. Gwalthney called the meeting to order at 7:00pm, and read the opening statements.

2. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Public notice of this meeting pursuant to the Open Public Meeting’s Act has been given by the Board Secretary in the following manner:

Faxing notice to the Gloucester County Times and to the Courier Post, and filing written notice with the Clerk of the City of Woodbury on November 1, 2006.

3. ROLL CALL

Mr. Chiesa	Present	Mrs. Dennen	Present
Mr. Ferraino	Present	Mr. Goodrich	Present
Mr. Gwalthney	Present	Mr. Haase	Present
Ms. Hill	Present	Mr. Lonabaugh	Absent
Ms. Moore	Present		

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

5. MISSION STATEMENT

6. GUIDELINES FOR A PUBLIC HEARING

- This is an opportunity for the Board of Education to gather information from the public. This is not a time for a debate with the public.
- Each speaker will have 5 minutes to speak. If they have a prepared statement, I will ask for a copy so that everything can be entered into the minutes. This way, all of us will have complete notes from which to refer, to confer and to infer.

- No speaker will be able to address the Board of Education again that night until all others have had a chance to speak. Thus, no “yielding of time” should be necessary.

7. PRESENTATION

Elementary Grade Reconfiguration - Mr. Jones

8. MEETING OPENED TO THE PUBLIC FOR COMMENT

MOTION TO OPEN THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC FOR COMMENT:

Motion: Ms. Moore Second: Mr. Chiesa
 Voice Vote: Yes: 8 No: 0

1. Russell Butler – 102 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury - commented on the HVAC System and he stated that on the financial list it seems to be the #1 cost saving issue. Mr. Butler commented on equal education and questioned why it was not happening now. He referred to the parking lots needing expansions and questioned why we were not fixing Walnut’s as well.
2. Amy Butler – 102 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – Stated she is not sending her 5-year old daughter to West End or Evergreen. Mrs. Butler also pointed out that 2000 kids are abducted every day and she referred to the list of child molesters located in Woodbury.
3. George Schreyer – 63 Walnut Street, Woodbury – stated he believes in neighborhood schools and stated that this is the strength of Woodbury. He stated that small class sizes are needed and any increase in class size is not good. Mr. Schreyer stated that the students and teachers in Walnut School are very good and that the District should consider a long term plan for consolidating everything up near the High School.
4. Karl Kinkler – 238 Delaware Street, Woodbury – stated that closing schools in Woodbury is not new. Mr. Kinkler pointed out that at one time there were five (5) elementary schools. He stated that the neighborhoods did deteriorate in the areas where these schools closed. Some of these same areas fell to rental property. Mr. Kinkler provided a letter from Kenneth McIlvaine, Broker for Budd Realty, Inc. (Attachment A).
5. Bill Toole – 1141 Tatum Street, Woodbury – stated that he moved to Woodbury five (5) years ago because of the local schools. Mr. Toole stated if homes sell because of this, more children may move in and increase class size. Mr. Toole also referred to parents walking anywhere up to 5 miles with students in both West End and Evergreen.
6. Derek Lynch – 112 Watkins Avenue, Woodbury – questioned how many Board Members live in the north end of town? He also stated that this closing will not affect Board Members. Families will just move if the school closes.

7. Steve Seamen – 38 Hess Avenue, Woodbury – questioned the savings on electric, gas and insurance. He stated that if the building was vacant the District would still have to pay for the electric, gas and insurance. Mr. Seamen questioned the possible student increase in 5 years and asked what the District would do then. He questioned transportation and whether or not it was figured into the calculation of savings. Mr. Seamen also questioned the bond referendum and asked why we need to close if the District has \$23 million dollars and questioned why there is a need for Astroturf for the High School.
8. Bob Abernathy –111 Watkins Avenue, Woodbury – stated that he is here as a taxpayer and as he drives through Woodbury he cannot help but notice boarded-up buildings. He stated he voted for the bond referendum and now the District wants to close Walnut School.
9. Joe Doyle – 54 Dubois Avenue, Woodbury – stated he graduated from Woodbury Schools and stated that we all would like to see the tax rate go down. Mr. Doyle also stated that safety is the deal breaker for this plan. Mr. Doyle believed that the bond referendum to be a commitment to the school and parents. He stated he understood the finance committee’s responsibility to review a tax savings plan. Mr. Doyle stated that the plan will ruin any goodwill the community has with the Board and Administration. Mr. Doyle stated he will support the District if the District is looking out for the best interest of the students. He questioned if the plan goes through would the District sell the school. Mr. Doyle provided a written opinion of his concerns. (Attachment B).
10. Bruce Tumolo – 40 Dubois Avenue, Woodbury – stated he chose the Woodbury Public Schools because the location of Walnut School. Mr. Tumolo stated he despises the proposal. He stated he voted on the referendum for necessary work at Walnut. He stated he feels betrayed and the proposal appears to be fast tracked. Mr. Tumolo questioned if this plan has been in the works for a long time. Mr. Tumolo discussed transportation and walking issues. Mr. Tumolo referred to an empty building after it closes. Mr. Tumolo questioned what happens if West End cannot increase class size. He questioned the costs in the plan and lunch aides and stated concerns for his 7-year old daughter. Mr. Tumolo submitted his opinion on this matter. (Attachment C).
11. Catherine and George Kaizer – Woodbury – stated that they have been Woodbury residents for two (2) years and chose Woodbury for Main Street and the local schools. They explained how they did a lot of research to find this school and if the District closes Walnut down they will move.
12. Charlie Weber – 48 Progress Avenue, Woodbury – stated that his daughter did not want to go to the High School until the Principal of the High School showed her test scores. Mr. Weber stated that the teachers in the District make the difference. Mr. Weber referred to the safety of the walking students.

13. James Florida – Woodbury – stated he has lived across the street from Walnut School for the past 22 years. Mr. Florida stated that Walnut is good for the neighborhood – it is safe. Mr. Florida also stated that there are many contractors attending tonight meeting that could install the HVAC system a lot cheaper than what the Board will pay for.
14. Janet Lancaster – 31 Walnut Street, Woodbury – stated husband was raised on Walnut Street and she is concerned for her grandchildren. Mrs. Lancaster pointed out that the disadvantage list did not mention transportation. Mrs. Lancaster stated that everyone is hung up on the 1.9 and 2.1 miles. Mrs. Lancaster stated the biggest issue is safety and the actual number of miles does not matter.
15. Anthony Rossett – 118 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – stated he supports the teachers and they are the reason he is living in Woodbury. Mr. Rossett stated if Walnut School closes he will move.
16. Sue Schrock – 49 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – stated that she brought her home 30 years ago so her children could walk to school. Mrs. Schrock questioned why we need 9 administrators for 3 schools and stated that the plan was not a good idea. Mrs. Schrock questioned on how fast the District was trying to move on this.
17. Dave Schrock – 49 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – referred to the \$100 a year savings as not enough. Mr. Schrock estimated that homeowners will lose \$10,000.00 off property value, and it would be killing the property values for the entire town due to increased traffic. Mr. Schrock also stated he remembers doing these 14 years ago.
18. Regina Becker – 24 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – questioned if projections will be performed for children entering into the school district in the future.
19. Stacy Jones – 233 South Maple Avenue, Woodbury – stated that four (4) of her children attended Walnut and it is the best school ever because it is personal. Ms. Jones stated she worked at Evergreen Elementary School and stated that Walnut is different than the rest of the schools. Ms. Jones referred to siblings taking each other to school
20. Dee Leeds – 27 Walnut Street, Woodbury and LaDawn Lancaster – 31 Walnut Street, Woodbury – submitted a petition signed by Walnut Street parents to keep the school open.

21. Mary Grimming – 80 Walnut Street, Woodbury – stated she was a teacher for many years in 1980s and this same issue came up. Ms. Grimming questioned how many more lunch aides would be needed at Evergreen if we moved more students to that school. Ms. Grimming stated that if the District triggers transportation that the District would be required to provide transportation to private school students as well. She stated that children test better in neighborhood schools because students are secure and they arrive happy. Ms. Grimming referred to white sheet “Social issues” and stated that they really are “safety issues”. Ms. Grimming stated that the newcomers to Walnut are in their 20’s and plan to stay 10-15 years and will bring more children. Ms. Grimming referred to the “vote” as needing to be binding not non-binding.
22. Patricia Bassler - 66 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – stated that the plan is just wrong. Ms. Bassler stated the top concern is financial not educational and the Board of Education must choose one.
23. Mrs. Townsend – 1148 Abbett Lane, Woodbury – stated she has two children who attend Most Holy Redeemer. She stated that her other child would need bussing because she is 2.1 miles from West End School.
24. Ed Wilcox – 131 Watkins Avenue, Woodbury – questioned the number of classes for each grade. Mr. Wilcox questioned if money could be moved from the other schools to pay for the HVAC at Walnut. Mr. Wilcox questioned how the Board was able to award HVAC bids for larger schools and not Walnut.
25. Gale Tanner – 474 Cooper Street, Woodbury – stated it is about the community and referred to Woodbury’s Schools as the “best” in the county.
26. Brittany Lowry – Woodbury - stated she was a special education graduate last year. Ms. Lowry referred to the walking issue. Ms. Lowry also stated that the residents are paying too much for taxes and not getting anything for it. She referred to the \$170/per year savings = \$14/month – tax payers will pay to keep the school open.
27. Heather McCumber – 1137 Tatum Street, Woodbury – stated she was born and raised in West Deptford. She is a lunch aide at Walnut. Ms. McCumber stated that the teachers and staff are amazing. Ms. McCumber stated the closing of Walnut would be a huge let down to the community and she would send her daughter to Paulsboro before walking 1.999 miles.
28. Helen Miller – 1132 Tatum Street, Woodbury – stated that her grandson who lived with her went to West End Kindergarten she drove him there every day. The ride here is too long.
29. A student of Woodbury – stated 5 years ago went to Walnut School. The student stated if the district decides to close Walnut School it would be the worst thing that could ever been done. This student stated that students cannot learn with 30 to 40 students in each class.

30. Lisa Latch – 118 Watkins Avenue, Woodbury – voiced concerns for her 3 year old daughter attending preschool at Evergreen. She questioned the survey, the end date and when the results will come in. Ms. Latch stated that safety and child molesters were the #1 concern. She stated that the District should listen to the community. Ms. Latch stated smaller classes are important and referred to private school enrollment where she works as being much higher than Walnut's average class size. Ms. Latch asked the Board to look at demographics and think about the liability.
31. A student of Woodbury – attended Walnut School last year. Stated it was the best school with a lot of opportunities. The student stated that he was afraid to walk home from the High School because of strangers on the street.
32. Brianna Jones – 233 South Maple Avenue, Woodbury – stated she attended Walnut School from Kindergarten to 5th grade and she had the best memories of school. Ms. Jones referred to teachers as family and stated that the teachers were there for her when her parent died.
33. Russell Butler – 102 Crescent Avenue, Woodbury – referred to predators and Woodbury being an open market for predators if the District closes Walnut School. Mr. Butler questioned why Walnut has been neglected for so long. He referred to crosswalks and signs to watch children.
34. Mary Grimming – 80 Walnut Street, Woodbury – provided a list of concerns; questioned the addition of a master teacher, centralized ordering, supplies, textbooks, etc. Walnut School to become a senior center, stating only 1 room seems to meet this purpose. Ms. Grimming questioned where the fire escape went to. Ms. Grimming questioned whether or not that was the first move to close Walnut down.
35. Derek Lynch - 112 Watkins Avenue, Woodbury – a member of the fire department stated that the fire escape at Walnut was deemed safe because of the small class sizes.
36. Doreen Lynch – 112 Watkins Avenue, Woodbury – stated she remembers when the District had open lunches and questioned why the District close lunches. Someone responded that it was deemed that Delaware Street was a safety hazard to cross.
37. Bruce Tumolo - 40 Dubois Avenue, Woodbury – referred to cutting principal's position and stated that Walnut's principal has two posts to be factored in.
38. Bill Toole – 1141 Tatum Street, Woodbury - stated there is not a person here supporting this plan.
39. Rachelle Selby – 525 Grant Street, Woodbury – spoke of additional traffic in West End and Evergreen School areas as a result of the plan.
40. Wade Schmidt – 87 Dubois Avenue, Woodbury – Mr. Schmidt provided the following sample costs: \$170/per house accessed at \$100,000 = \$14.16/per month, and stated it would cost more than \$14 per month to transport students.
41. Additional letter provided at this meeting. (Attachment D)

8. ADJOURNMENT TO END BOARD MEETING

MOTION TO END BOARD MEETING

Motion: Ms. Moore

Voice Vote: Yes: 8

Time: 9:15pm

Second: Mr. Ferraino

No: 0

Respectfully submitted,

Esther R. Pennell,
School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary