

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
November 20, 2006  
**West End 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 (entered 7:02pm)	Mr. Goodrich	Absent
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 - Mr. Gwalthney

- 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: Mr. Ferraino

Second: Mrs. Dennen

Voice Vote: Yes: 7

No: 0

1. Stephanie Jones – Spring Street – stated she moved to Woodbury 7 years ago for two reasons – the small schools and revitalization of Broad Street. She said there are several other things which can be looked at instead of closing schools and cited the Philadelphia Inquirer articles. She feels that the lack of sidewalks by CVS under the bridge are not safe. Also the West End and Evergreen parking lots are not able to handle additional cars. These areas were just renovated and it would be wasteful to dig up the new sod, sidewalks and trees that were just installed. Ms. Jones also stated that there is the threat of child predators. Her child went to pre-school at Evergreen and she didn't like the school. She is not comfortable moving her children between two schools. She feels that this issue should be put to a public referendum as she has not heard any positive comments yet.
2. John Belko – 605 Delaware Street – Commended the Board for the process and stated that the Board should think out of the box to save money. He feels this is a bad idea because it was founded on expecting children to walk, which is not realistic. Although many parents drive their children to school, many students still walk. Reconfiguring by grade level and not geography will create a nightmare. If Walnut School closes, there will be a significant negative impact on property values in that area which in turn would affect school and city budgets. Also, the cost of transporting students would eat up any savings the district would realize with this reconfiguration. Mr. Belko stated that the Walnut facilities were found to be adequate in the recent regionalization study.
3. Heather Tierney – 18 N. Child Street – Stated she is the 4<sup>th</sup> generation to attend the Woodbury School District. She asked if anyone has clocked the drive from Abbett Lane to the other schools. She also questioned whether any traffic studies were done by professional engineers. Other questions concerned whether educational studies would show a real education impact of grouping the same grades in the same school. Has an economic impact study been done on what would happen in the North end of Woodbury. It would be worth \$170 a year to keep Walnut open for safety reasons and she would like to see Walnut School remain open.
4. Libby Sellen – 612 W. Centre Street – Stated she has been a resident of Woodbury for 46 years and is a retired Walnut School teacher. She referred to the District's mission statement, which she worked on as part of a committee, indicates a "small, supportive community" which refers to neighborhood schools. If Walnut School closes, the Board is not following the Mission Statement.
5. Tricia Martin – 222 Columbia Street – Stated she has concerns with the \$150,000 figure for parking lot renovations and thinks it may cost more. She also questioned the extra funds needed for crossing guards. She stated that drivers do not park in approved zones.

6. Rachel Selby – 525 Grant Street – She indicated that when the 1<sup>st</sup> referendum failed the school board made a shift and she hopes they have the best interest in keeping Walnut School open, and should not solely base it on financial reasons. She is concerned if there is an increase in students and Walnut School is closed, there will be no turning back. She is also concerned on how parents will get students to school.
7. Dawn Scholenberger – Stated she has two children who attend West End School. As an educator, she feels class size is important and an increase in class size is not an option for this community. She referred to a pamphlet regarding Project Star, which conducted research on economically disadvantaged and African American students and indicates that most benefit in small classes.
8. Lee Weatherby – stated a full, comprehensive study is needed and has the Board considered splitting the two elementary schools by geography. He stated that full day pre-K could occur if current rooms were used. He stated that Woodbury has one of the highest property tax rates in the State and the community is telling you it is o.k. to spend the money. He feels that there are too many administrators in the district and the elected board should make decisions which represent the community.
9. Steven Abbott – Stated he has been a resident of Woodbury since age 2 and he is glad the Board has brought the conversation to the community. However he hopes the Board will consider everything said. He is not totally against the plan but persons without transportation need to be considered.
10. Rachel Robinson – Stated she is a grandmother of 2 and thanked each parent for speaking up. She asked the Board to please consider the age of the children, the distance needed to go, the lack of sidewalks and to provide transportation.
11. Sue Shrock – 49 Crescent Avenue – She stated she is ready to retire and leave New Jersey because of the taxes. She also stated that there are 10 preschool children on Crescent Avenue that the district doesn't know about and the district needs to project for the future. She'll volunteer to go door to door to put forth information. She questioned where the community would vote in Walnut School closed and stated that the holidays are a bad time to hold these meetings.
12. Tony Benecchi – 1108 Tatum Street – Referred to houses for sale in Woodbury and how the reconfiguration would be a deterrent to any home buyers.
13. Pat Bassler – Crescent Avenue – Asked about the \$350,000 unused referendum money. She stated that the district will lose state money if it does not do what was approved in the referendum. She questioned the \$360,000 used for parking lot upgrades must be addressed and that it wouldn't make sense to put parking on the only grassy area at Evergreen School. She asked if there was funding for a full day pre-k now and what are the benefits of a full-day pre-k. She referred to the State FES and the number of students in classes. She would like more concrete information on enrollment at the next board meeting and asked the Board to put kids first.
14. Russell Butler – Crescent Avenue – Asked many questions regarding the HVAC replacement at Walnut School.

15. Bill Toole – Tatum Street – Stated we have students over two miles and estimates that it would cost \$40 a month to drive kids to other schools. That is more than the tax savings projected. He feels that if students are split by geography, there will be a financial savings only.
16. John Martin – 222 Columbia Street – Thanks the public for all the input. He would like data on the ratio of teachers vs. administrators. He asked how this reconfiguration would affect administration. He requested for someone to direct him on where to find this information.
17. Adrian Gekas – American Street – Stated no one can put a price on a child's safety. \$654,000 will be spent on a lawsuit.
18. Bill Fleming – 61 N. Bayard Avenue – Stated he spent 12 years on the Board of Education and the Board comes to meetings to listen to the community and make a decision based on what they hear. The Board considered this issued twice before, once being 7 or 8 years ago. This scenario is more intriguing and contains more details than previously. Walnut School is a great asset to the community in the North of Woodbury and the schools is loved by staff and parents. Mr. Fleming disagrees with a referendum and stated it should be a decision based on the majority and forced on the North end of Woodbury. He recommends some form of bussing if this reconfiguration takes place and said that the Board's responsibility is to do what's in the best interest of the students and not the taxpayers.
19. Robert Curtis – 40 N. Maple Street – Stated he's heard a lot of negative comments and stated the Board is not sure of the savings and feels that if the Board thinks outside of the box, more savings will be found. He feels this will destabilize property values. He stated that shared services for administrators should be looked at. Mr. Curtis stated that the police department now can not get enough crossing guards. He questioned who would buy Walnut School.
20. Joe Doyle – 54 Dubois Avenue – Referenced a Woodbury football game attended with his friends and they were afraid to get up and get a hot dog. If this plan goes through, he is moving. He doesn't want his children to be afraid to eat. Woodbury pride is not something just put on a t-shirt. Many live this and believe it.
21. Mary Ferguson - 751 Wick Boulevard – Stated she has a 4 year old Pre-k student at Evergreen and a 15 year old at the high school. She referred to the walking distance from her home. She stated that all the other school districts listed on the hand-out which have this plan have transportation. She referred to an incident two years ago when it snowed and Woodbury was the only district open. The sidewalks were not shoveled and were not safe. She feels full-day Pre-k is not necessary and that there is a rumor that the district would take away the new playground equipment at Evergreen.
22. Bruce Tumolo – 40 Dubois Avenue – stated it is important to realize the Board didn't have to have a public forum. He realizes the Board is looking for ways to save money. He hopes this will be the final time that the community will hear about closing Walnut School and the district needs to allow Mrs. Romano to retire from Walnut.

23. Walt Ward – 23 N. Childs Street - Has a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader at West End and loves the area and the school. He referred to all studies that need to be done and the timing issues. He feels this happened very quickly and the plan was not thought out.
24. Cecilia Roan – 131 S. Childs Street – Stated she moved here 15 years ago and is impressed by the City. What has kept her here has been West End School. She feels \$150 won't make a big difference in her taxes but will make a big difference in her quality of life. She feels the plan would deter all people considering moving to Woodbury and that the Board is pushing parents out by trying to push this.
25. Rick Hock – 345 W. Centre Street – Asked about a ballot question approved by voters and mentioned Walnut Street and whether a decision should go back to voters to eliminate work and close the school.
26. Jennifer Holiday – sated she has two boys – aged 7 and 5 – and doesn't drive and works. It would be hard to transport her boys to school.
27. Connie Belko – 60-5 Delaware Street – thanked the board for opening the process to the public. She stated she attends many board meetings and that Walnut School HVAC is constantly being reconsidered at the monthly board meetings. There's been no effort by the Board to neglect Walnut School. The Regionalization study didn't recommend regionalization but recommended the Board to look at closing Walnut School. She stated that there should not be a referendum about this. Community members presently support Walnut School; non-supporters may not agree with parents.
28. Wendy Siera – 219 S. Warner Street – Asked that traffic patterns be looked at. At 3:00 p.m. and after, there is very bad traffic on Evergreen Avenue.
29. Cindy Norton – 16 N. American Street – Stated that her child will be attending pre-k next year and says “no thanks” to a full day program. She feels she doesn't need it and the district can't afford it.
30. Dana Albinson – 50 Chestnut Street – Has children in Walnut School and they love the school. Feels the slogan “It's Personal” would no longer apply.
31. Russell Butler – 102 Crescent Avenue – Questioned the lack of transportation and stated that this should be about the children.
32. Lee Weatherby – Asked why wasn't Walnut School HVAC afforded. He referred to current academic advantages – Star School, #1 High School, NASA, # 1 in testing, sports and stated that this is financially based. He is not sure of the academics and full day pre-k.
33. Dave Shrock – 49 Crescent Avenue – Thinks this will cost the city money because it will lower property values.

MOTION TO CLOSE THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC FOR COMMENT:

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Ferraino  
 Voice Vote: Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_

Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Chiesa \_\_\_\_\_  
 No: \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_

9. ADJOURNMENT TO END BOARD MEETING

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE BOARD MEETING:

Motion: Mr. Ferraino

Second: Mr. Chiesa

Voice Vote: Yes: 7

No: 0

Time: 9:20pm

Respectfully submitted,

Esther R. Pennell,  
School Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary