

Colonial Village Neighborhood Association
Wednesday, April 18, 2012

Attendance: 88

Present: President Karl Biasi, Mike Morofsky, Aaron Beavers. Meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

Police Report: Officer Joe Ridel – District 8 (Generally works Wed-Sat) – Officer Ridel gave a quick report he also brought Officer Pratl. Highway on the North and W. to Waverly and East to Washington. Lots of speeders on MLK and parking complaints after 2 a.m. Party complaint on Lenore (the Police spoke to them). Larceny from Auto have been happening. Poxson break in with autos this week. Please remember to lock your doors. Under age 16 curfew is midnight. City parks the curfew is dusk. Will talk to neighbors in the hall if residents have specific concerns.

Craig Singer from L&L Shopping Center wanted to give some news on the plaza. They have done a lot and you will see more happening this summer. Rite Aid was on a short term lease and have committed to a long term lease. PNC Bank also renewed a long term lease. Family Dollar will be going into the Hollywood Video Store location – it is a proto-type store with merchandise different than other businesses – should be open this summer. They will also be taking some space from the supermarket. Also they are in talks with other businesses (hardware store, general merchandise store). Working on landscaping and parking lot. Working on getting a variance for a new sign and would like to put on signs tenant names on sign. Neighbors volunteered to donate perennials. Craig indicated there could be liability issues with neighbor help and that is why he has not accepted in the past.

The Core Discussion of the Meeting was on the Closure of Elmhurst Elementary. Guest Myra Ford, President of the Lansing School Board spoke and answered questions.

Karl Biasi started the discussion about how wrote several page letter to the school district. He pulled out some paragraphs from that letter to share with neighbors tonight. Elmhurst mention awhile back as a possibility of closure because of “low enrollment” and been following the issue. Elmhurst not mentioned recently with budgets and closures. We were surprised that in March it was announced to be closed due to “low enrollment.” We have other schools in the area that might be in worse physical shape. The presentation in March had no information ahead of time.

How was it made? School Board President Myra Ford indicated it was “Complicated.” Various reasons. Conditions of aging building. Otto Middle School is the worse condition. Main reason “low enrollment” K-5 students 67 live in Elmhurst attendance area others are here by school of choice or pre-primary special education students. This played a role.

Melissa Quan Huber sent some questions. Why were schools on the south end? North end schools are full. Declining enrollment is on the south side of Lansing. The Board has been “excited” about the plan. Academic issues.

Myra Ford said they want to provide direct services to students and the bricks and mortar do not educate children. Said that this was a researched based plan. Pre-K through grade 3 education. Learning to read. 4-12 is reading to learn. Money spent on supplies, etc.

Statement that Karl made at a breakfast meeting. Want to confirm that the Neighborhood picnic, voting precincts, etc. will still be able to use the facility. Will the school board made a commitment?

Is the school board going to be a part of the process? Myra Ford said that she would be interested in attending neighborhood meetings. She has been involved in the neighborhoods. If neighborhoods would like them to attend they would be happy to attend.

Question: What were the factors and why Elmhurst vs. Lewton.

Myra Ford did indicate that letters going out where your child would attend. This was in error. She is apologizing.

Residents wanted to know if we are being punished. Not given a chance to speak out.

Julie Reed. Has two children that have attended Elmhurst the past six year parent and Dean Transportation. She said that Data on Elmhurst on Statewide percentage (Top School #2 place). Almost 300 students. PPI students. Great Starts students. General Ed students. Elmhurst is a great school to come to Elmhurst. Students that come to Elmhurst from Eaton Rapids, high test school, clean building, build in 1951. Not given sinking funds. We were told in February that it was not being closed. P-3 or 4-6th grade. That was the day we were told that it was being close. Live a half a mile from the school. Told she had to walk to school. Will be bussing 12th graders under the new plan. Another paper said that you were saving \$2.5 million. No PPI will be moved to Cumberland, Riddle and another school on the north end of school. All these will need to be bussed to the northside of town. Will be spending lots more money. Let's keep Elmhurst open one more year, keep bussing and it will keep neighborhood and families happy. No one is happy about the 7-12th grade. Will there be an increase in teen pregnancies? Does not matter if they are separated they will interact with younger students. Students are crying and not happy.

Elmhurst is one of the best schools in the district. How is that fair?

Myra Ford mentioned that Eastern/Pattengill were joined for many years.

Myra Ford said that Elmhurst does have high scores. The process happened very fast.

The discussion on the busses. Dean does not transport for free. The outsourcing has not been finalized. Privatizing and savings on retirement costs. This part of the discussion.

Question- About academics pre-k-3 will be sent to a K-8. One parent received letter for her kindergarten that reads at first grade. Second child has some reading challenges. Only received one letter for one child. Will have the students be placed with their teachers at STEM. Answer: there will be bumping, no guarantees.

No year round school at this juncture.

Claude Beavers taught 7-12 grade schools several years ago. Importance of reading through K-3. Neighborhood schools are very important, neighborhood schools, please reconsider this school.

Discussion on the Re-purpose Elmhurst. Senior volunteers office.

Logistic question. About the various schools. The administration. Pre-K through 3.

Neighbors requested that Myra Ford please send citations about articles she mentioned tonight to CVNA.

Other Comments:

School in the middle. By closing this type of school. Children to meet and learn with children. Children need to be comfortable.

Not a logical choice or decision. Does not matter what school will close.

Report on the Closing of Elmhurst Elementary School with Myra Ford, Lansing School District Board President. Changes in Lansing. Attended Maplewood herself, chose school of choice for her granddaughter because it would be K-6. Goes to the same Dr. etc. Wants to have her kids/grandkids go to the same schools, need to be with children that are her peers. Three high schools – by moving students into these schools (7-12). Still looking at Sexton and Eastern then build a new high school. 7-12 will physically be located into those schools. Researched based for having fewer drop outs.

Concerns and discussion about younger children being bussed all over the city due to the school closures. Many wondered how much money this would cost.

Total enrollment at Elmhurst was less than 200 – Myra said it was that number. Parents disagreed with this number and indicated that the district had limited bussing for this school, possibly decreasing students to attend and impact student numbers.

Academics – second largest school open. We do not understand. PTA was not told about this meeting to vote on closure.

Pattengill will be 4-6 grade in the fall.

Post Oak – Will keep their Chinese emersion program. PreK-5 in the future.

Many at the meeting were not happy with this situation.

Griffen Rivers, a candidate for 68th House Seat questioned the process.

A great deal involved to do the restructuring. Change in administration. Recommendations to keep the public (parents and neighbors) better informed going forward. Keep in mind the process going forward. Develop a process for the future that includes social media.

Comments about the Principal – Susan Saltzman is being moved to Riddle in the fall. Concerns that the teachers are being split up and or bumped. Neighbors expressed frustration that teachers were notified in the media and not able to stay together.

The parents wanted to know if in the future STEM will be magnet in application. Will Elmhurst students be given priority? Initially at Dwight Rich with a smaller number.

There were continued concerns about cost savings because the building will still need maintenance, lighting, etc. if Elmhurst will still be opened.

Thank you. Meeting wrapped up at 8:55.

Carol Wood – Budget hearings coming up. Please get involved.