

5/10/16 LPC Forum Question/Concerns/Comments

The following is a list of concerns voiced at the public Forum on 5/10/16. There were not a lot of questions asked but those that were are included here with the answer. Most were suggestions or thoughts for the LPC to consider.

- Speaker stated that she was a parent who volunteered a great deal in the schools. Parent of a 6th grader and an 8th grade. From her perspective the consolidation of the schools must take place. She is already looking at ways to get her children out of this district. Students are not getting what they need. My daughter is bored and wants more. My children want more. I have given greatly of myself to give to this district but I must focus on getting my children what they need. I am not faulting the teachers. They are doing their best. We must merge schools to be able to offer our students better opportunities.
- Speaker stated “thank you” to all of the committee members, your time is valuable. Some of the information we have seen is old. The Parson’s Report for one being done in 2011. Things have been done in this building since then. I know there have been a lot of improvements to this building. The gym roof has been overhauled, doors, windows changed. \$53,000.00 approved by the board a few meetings ago to address the gas lines. There are things that still need to be approved. Building built in three stages, 1962, 1967, and 1994. The whole building is not as old as what has been portrayed. We have seen the plan, I have had some questions about the plan and some of those were answered tonight. I did not see anything about Milton and Bedford Elementary and what rooms would be used there. My question about the committee. I thought that you all were the planning committee but it looks to me like someone else put the plan together and you are just an approving committee. Maybe that is a state thing. One thing I have not heard is the cost of moving from one school to another. We have heard of the savings and it looks like most of the savings is coming from laying off staff. Each of you has to decide if you have the information you need to close a school. I agree that some things need to be done. I hear someone at one of the meetings talking about \$16-18,000,000. Our enrollment is declining, unemployment is on the rise in the county. It would be best if we step back and take our time. Let’s not rush into something.

There has been a lot of information given. The committee has had access to everything to which district leadership has access. As to it being old, the Parson’s Report was done in 2011. It is what the state is currently using to award urgent need money to those districts who have positioned themselves to receive it. It does not matter how we view that report, it is what is currently used. There has been work done in the high school. The renovation last summer was a \$2,000,000 renovation. On the Parson’s Report renovation to standard was estimated to be over \$11,000,000. That will have increased since that report was done through cost of materials increasing. What has been done to the high school would have very little impact on the rating as a school that was

given in 2011. The Parson's report assessed the whole building physically and rated it not just based on when it was built. The rating it was given took into consideration the 1994 wing.

As to how Milton and Bedford would be used, this was not mapped out because those buildings have ample space for the 6th graders (each school receiving around 53 students) with minimal change. The committee is at the leisure to develop their own plan as they wish. They are not an approving committee. I believe the committee has worked diligently to gather all of the facts they can and I do not feel they deserve that type of statement to be made about them. If it was an approval committee we would have been done after the third meeting. The cost of moving has not been discussed because the movement will be made by district personnel. We will not be spending money on that aspect of the plan. It has been said a few times that the savings are all in cutting staff. Yes, that is a major part. That is also a one time savings. We will not be able to ever make that much of a cut in one year again. Our revenue is still not increasing, our enrollment is still going down, we will still be around \$476,000 in the negative having cut nearly everything there is to cut. There will be more expenses next year. There will continue to be expenses from TCMS and TCHS as long as they house students. We are trying to put together a long term plan that addresses the negative funds in the general fund, the lack of facility funding and bonding ability, and our academic programs which are impacted by all of the above. It is a long term and multifaceted plan. If this district, this community has the opportunity to bring \$16,000,000 into this community for the purpose of improving a facility for 7-12 grade students it is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I do not comprehend how anyone would suggest that we wait or turn that down.

- **Speaker stated that she is a parent of three elementary students. I have a personal stake in what happens in our schools. I am also the community educator for the district. My salary does not come from the school board, it comes from a state grant. I get to see all of the schools on a regular basis. Inside and outside. I get to hear what our student say about our schools. I do the KIP survey. One of the first projects I worked on was needs assessment to learn from students what they think we need to improve our schools. I focused with the middle school. The group met to discuss what they would like to see change to make our school great. 100 students talking about what they like and didn't like. They said they love Trimble County Schools but they would like to see a nicer facility. That stuck out to me. I cannot change that. They say I visit this school and that school and they have this and that. Why can't we have that? When I bring in community members into our high school for meetings on of the first things I heard was "wow, you could really use an upgrade." Or a lady from the health department just the other day said "You're getting kind of dated." We don't notice it because we see it every day. Outside people see it and students see it. Students say "I want to go to a school that is the best." We don't live in a county with a large tax base, I know. But putting all of our kids in one area that we can improve on and giving our students more opportunities to take advance courses is what most parents want. They want their child to have the best opportunity. Looking at things and keeping them the same just because it has always been that way scares me. It is not necessarily the best. Almost 50% of the population do not have children in the schools so they do not care what goes on here but they have to pay. Those people need more activity space. They need places for community use. Senior**

citizens could use TCMS gym for walking in the winter. This could bring in more revenue for our district.

- Students stated that TCHS is bad, gross, disgusting, embarrassing, nasty, inadequate, dull, depressing, boring, old, etc. Students say these things on a daily basis. We have pictures of some of the nastiest places in this school that we will pass around. This is what students see every day in our school. Students are not excited to come here. We think merging schools is a good idea. We need a change. Merging is good for short term. What we need is a new building. We need a new fit for the students. Older people see our school as always being the same, students see it as always getting worse. We want to build up everyone but we can only do so much. We need your help. Fewer students are going to want to come to this school when but if people say great things about this school then more people will want to come to this school. This would help enrollment, revenue. We know that there needs to be action taken to improve the school. The school is the students. We are Awesome, intelligent, outgoing, great staff and students, we are the future. I am a freshman. I want to see some of these changes happen. I want to see the grades come together. We need to be great together. We need a lot of greatness and we need it from you.

THESE ARE TRULY THE ONLY VOICES THAT ANY OF US SHOULD BE LISTENING TO TO MAKE THIS DECISION, OUR STUDENTS.

- Thank you for your hard work on this committee. I applaud Chris for suggesting secret ballot. No one has anything to be ashamed of but some people may be intimidated by making a statement in front of their employer. The speaker offered an apology to Mr. Miracle for questions asked in the last forum, Mr. Miracle stated that it was not necessary to apologize. As far as the school system the school system is the students, the faculty, it is the building. That is a part of it. Each of us has an income. The school system has an income, a tax base to work with. I challenge you to not to push the tax base to the point that we actually continue to push people out of the county. I applaud the mother who said she was going to challenge her children. We have to do something to get more than 90% of our student to go to school. There are 20 people on this committee. Do you have the information you need to make this decision.

My only comment to this is to say no one on this committee has any reason to feel intimidated. The committee has the option to vote however they wish and it makes no difference to me. The point was brought up more than once, however, last week. I simply want to ask some of those former employees who attend the meetings regularly to likewise refrain intimidating employees of the district by referring to who hire them in this district. Everyone has a right to attend these meetings, to speak at the forums, and not have to feel that they will be ostracized for how they think or what they say.