

5/31/12

TO: Mansfield Town Council

FR: Nancy Tomastik, Maple Road, resident of Mansfield for 39 years

RE: School Building Project



First of all, probably like many of you, I've run the gamut of emotions and conclusions about what should be done regarding our elementary schools. Out of all that's been said, I believe that one of the most powerful statements came from Mansfield Board of Education member Martha Kelly, when she recently changed her mind and her recommendation from the Two-School Option to the 3-school rehab option. I've known Martha for many years, and I know her to be reasonable, sensible, and caring for children and their education. I give credence to her opinion based on her extensive knowledge of the schools and on her concern for the entire picture for our town. I have also come to the conclusion that we should keep all 3 schools.

You know, the townspeople from the past did a great job of setting up our 3 neighborhood schools in good locations. My own adult children are successful examples of our K-12 schools, for which I am grateful. Mansfield would be hard pressed to do better than what we have now - - or even to do as well! In fact, my big concern is that 2 new schools will actually be a downgrade in many important ways, such as leaving us less flexibility as demographics change over the years.

2nd item: My ears perked up just recently when the Sustainability Committee reported that there's a new program for financing more energy efficient schools. I hope it rang a bell with you, too, and maybe even lit a light bulb above your heads - - an energy efficient light bulb! I understood the idea being that a school could borrow the funding for new energy systems (such as new boilers) and with the money saved pay it back over a number of years with no bonding necessary. The point is that there are State programs and subsidies which can make the upgrades more cost effective, whereas building 2 new schools is financially going into the deep, dark unknown, with unforeseen problems and cost overruns being inevitable. We already see that with Storrs Center. And, if I were Suzy Orman and you asked me: "Can the town afford 2 new schools plus all the other upcoming huge projects?" I would say "DENIED!" To fix what we've got is the financially conservative approach. To fix what we've got is also the educationally sound and historically successful approach.

3rd and last of all, whatever you do, PLEASE do NOT have a school building referendum in November. Have it any OTHER time but then. I shudder at the thought that during a presidential election, UConn students will be out at the polls in droves voting on our life-changing school referendum. What vested interest do they have in the future of our schools? Very little or none at all. Another thing: You know that they usually vote "yes", so, to avoid cynicism and resentment, please don't give even the appearance that you may be exploiting the college student vote for the outcome you want. Or, who knows, there's even a chance the kids are mad at the town for curbing their Spring weekend activities and will vote "no" on anything. Either way, it's not good.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. And thank you for all of your time and caring that you give so generously as Council members.

May 31, 2012

To: Mansfield Town Council

From: Mansfield Commission on Aging

Dear Town Councilors,

The Commission on Aging would like to remind you that the needs of the senior population of Mansfield are currently being underserved by the present Senior Center facility.

The existing Senior Center has experienced about 20,000 individual visits per year or approximately 77 per day. According to the My Senior Center program, twenty five percent of Mansfield residents 55 and older use the Senior Center at least once a year. Additional new programs often cannot be accommodated due to lack of space. The Commission on Aging now meets at Juniper Hill because of space considerations at the Senior Center.

The sixty-five and older population in the State of Connecticut is expected to increase 54% in the next 18 years. The need for additional space is imminent!

At this time, The Mansfield Commission on Aging requests that a new Senior Center be proposed and listed as a capital project if it is not already.

Respectfully,

April Holinko

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'April Holinko', written in a cursive style.

Chairperson, Commission on Aging