

# **MATERIALS IN SUPPORT OF A REVITALIZED WOODBURN SITE**

**June 15, 2010**



**Prepared by the Woodburn Community School Initiative**

<http://newwoodburncommunityschool.org/>

**Submitted to the Monongalia County Board of Education,  
Superintendent Frank Devono, the West Virginia Board of Education,  
Director of the School Building Authority Mark Manchin, and  
WVU President James Clements**

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# I. SUMMARY

- The Mon County Board of Education (BOE) and Superintendent's Office have not shown due diligence in communicating accurate information to the public about school closings and plans for a consolidated new school.
- At initial meetings in November between Board members Joe Statler, Mike Kelly, and Woodburn representatives, the Woodburn representatives were asked not to contact Mark Manchin, Director of the School Board Authority (SBA), but to let Dr. Devono communicate with him so as to not muddy the waters regarding a grant proposal. The Woodburn residents honored that request. When it became clear that decisions were being made without public knowledge, three Woodburn representatives met with Dr. Manchin on April 12, 2010, who told them it was "late in the game" to be raising these concerns. At this meeting, Woodburn representatives learned that false information had been given by BOE President Nancy Walker about SBA required acreage and by Superintendent Devono about available monies for next year. (See "Letter to Mon County BOE" from *Susan Eason, et. al* and "Timeline" November and April 12).
- On April 7, 2010, Chris Haddox attended a small meeting in Morgantown to discuss a possible new green school in Mon County. Dr. Manchin and Superintendent Devono were present. A large West Virginia contractor was also represented--the only contractor present. This meeting took place before the School Building Authority (SBA) had approved the BOE proposal. Several times during the meeting, Dr. Manchin expressed his confidence that the proposal was all but funded. (See "Timeline" April 7).
- On May 24, Chris Haddox wrote to Dr. Manchin, Dr. Steven Paine, and Mr. David Sneed requesting the full BOE grant proposal that had been funded for 8.6 million dollars. As of June 14, 2010, Haddox has not received this information in possible violation of state law requiring that information requests be responded to within five days. On June 14, Haddox received confirmation from the Assistant to the State Superintendent that his earlier request and his follow-up email (June 2, 2010) had been communicated to Dr. Paine.
- On June 3, Superintendent Devono sent home the first communication to Woodburn parents specifically about closing and consolidating the school. The only time Superintendent Devono visited Woodburn to speak about the closing was at the request of the Woodburn Association of Neighbors. This meeting took place on Feb 25, 2010, and was not announced to Woodburn parents. (Also see "Information Generated by Concerned Parents," D).
- At a BOE meeting on June 8, 2010, President Walker shut down public questions. This meeting was attended by approximately fifty people. No additional seating was provided. People stood in the hallway and along the perimeters of the room. No guidelines were established at the beginning of the meeting or at any other time for how discussion would be handled. (see "Timeline" June 8)
- At the same June 8 meeting, architect Ted Shriver presented inaccurate and misleading information to the Board and to the public about site selection. An ethics violation has been filed against Mr. Shriver with the West Virginia Board of Architecture (See "Complaint Filed")
- The closure hearings scheduled for June 22 and June 24 appear to be window dressing, with the site decision already made, as indicated by comments made by Mike Kelly on the radio June 10. (See "Timeline" June 10)
- In two weeks' time, over 230 Monongalia residents signed a petition opposed to the Mileground site. The petition was presented to the School Board on June 8, but it will not be made part of the CEFPP record. At the CEFPP meeting on May 17, the Board did not announce when the period of public comment would end. The Board voted to end public comment at a subsequent Board meeting (minutes not yet available), excluding the petition from the CEFPP record.

# II. LETTERS TO BOE AND OPEN LETTERS

## II. A. Letter from City Council to BOE President Walker

February 25, 2010

Dear President Nancy A. Walker:

On behalf of Morgantown City Council, I am writing to express concern about plans to close Woodburn Elementary School and consolidate with Easton on a site outside of the City. We are also concerned about plans to re-shape Suncrest Primary as a pre-K bussed-in-facility rather than a Primary School for students who live near to the school.

We feel that it is imperative to educate Woodburn Elementary and Suncrest Primary students at their current locations for the following reasons:

- Each neighborhood school is a major “anchor” of the community. Many young families choose to live in the Woodburn and Suncrest neighborhoods because of the close proximity to these schools, as well as the high quality education these schools have offered. These schools are close to where parents work and where families can take advantage of

City services and amenities.

- It is important to provide elementary and primary school options for families that choose an urban lifestyle. This includes parents who don’t drive a car and those who prefer to walk.
- These schools and their playgrounds serve as common areas for parents and students before and after school and during out-of-school time during the summer and weekends.
- A Healthy Green School begins with students and parents being able to walk to school.
- Retaining schools in their urban location encourages re-development, neighborhood stabilization, and positive community impacts.

This is an opportunity to develop compact urban schools using an urban scale of development, avoiding a sprawl.

We respectfully ask that the Board of Education take time to listen to the needs of the communities before making a decision.

Sincerely,  
Bill Byrne, Mayor



## **II. B. Letter to the Monongalia County Board of Education**

Susan Eason, Tom Shamberger, Chris Haddox  
The Monongalia County Board of Education  
13 South High Street  
Morgantown, WV 26501

Dear Dr. Devono and members of the Board of Education,

On Monday, April 12, 2010, three members of the Woodburn Association of Neighbors, Susan Eason, Tom Shamberger and Chris Haddox, met with Dr. Mark Manchin of the WV School Building Authority (SBA). The purpose of the visit was to gain a better understanding of the SBA's role in working with county Boards of Education that are seeking funding for school projects. More specifically, it was to learn what influence the SBA holds over local Boards when they are crafting their school projects for submission for SBA consideration.

Over the course of the ninety minute discussion, several things emerged that countered what we had been led to believe by different members of our local Board at various meetings around the proposed consolidation of Woodburn and Easton Elementary Schools. First, Dr. Manchin informed us that the seven-acre site guideline is just that—a guideline. He went over the process by which Boards can request waivers to site size guidelines, pointing out that the request can be made by a simple letter to the SBA and that the SBA has sole discretion whether to grant the waiver. There is no convoluted process involving the WV Board of Education or any other entity, as both you and architect Mr. Shriver supposed. Dr. Manchin pointed to examples where waivers have been granted.

When asked about the site visit Dr. Manchin made to the Woodburn site, he candidly admitted he felt it was a tough site, but allowed that had the Board wished to show how it could develop a project on the existing site of 4 acres, a waiver could have been within the realm of possibility. This is a very different story than you, specifically Board President Walker, shared with us when the message was communicated that Dr. Manchin would not support a school on the current Woodburn site as it did not meet the seven acre.

Second, when asked about the Boards message that if it did not submit a plan in this round of funding, there would be a high chance of missing an opportunity as next year's SBA budget would be significantly lower, Dr. Manchin indicated that yes, this years funding is about as sure a thing as there is. However, there is projected to be another \$60-\$70 million available in next years round and as the SBA wants very much to do a showcase project in Morgantown, and as very few Boards in West Virginia have the capacity to pull off such a project, the chances of funding would be very high next year as well.



When presented with our perception that the SBA's understanding of sustainable design and development is centered on one small component of that process, the building itself, Dr. Manchin acknowledged this was the case. He did say that the SBA's vision is broadening and the current vision in no way precludes Boards from bringing forth cutting edge proposals for consideration. In fact, the SBA grasps the long term and far reaching impacts of school siting decisions on the larger community and believes in community based school approaches as identified by numerous entities such as the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Council for Educational Facility Planners International. We were left with the distinct impression that a proposal from this Board that was crafted in coordination with the City of Morgantown Comprehensive Plan, the City of Morgantown Housing Study, the City of Morgantown Downtown Strategic Plan, and the MPO/DOH plans for addressing the Mileground traffic quagmire would be welcomed. Such a plan could put both this Board and the SBA firmly on the path to a cutting edge sustainable design worthy of national exposure. As it stands now, a high performance building on a green field site with no walkability will fall way short of that goal.

As Dr. Manchin pointed out multiple times, it is very late in this ballgame to be addressing the issues we raised. In his words, "it would have been helpful to have this discussion several months ago." In initial meetings between Board members Statler and Kelly and our Woodburn representatives, we were asked to please not contact Dr. Manchin directly, but to let Dr. Devono communicate with him so as to not muddy the waters and we honored that request. In hindsight, there was too much at stake to not have our own dialogue with Dr. Manchin.

In closing we request that the Board take the current proposal off the table, request a planning grant from the SBA and spend the next six months preparing a new proposal for a school that is based in an existing residential community, is pedestrian accessible and that is conceived in coordination with the aforementioned planning processes. This proposal can be submitted to the November 2010 funding round.



## **II. C. Letter to School Building Authority of WV: “No school on the Mileground”**

by Susan Eason  
School Building Authority of West Virginia  
2300 Kanawha Boulevard, East  
Charleston, WV 25311-2306

To Members of the School Building Authority:

As you are gathering to consider school construction proposals pursuing “green” funding, I want to make one last effort to highlight what a poor site location the proposed Mon BOE green elementary school site is. The Mon BOE has a proposal before you for a \$12 million dollar green school building. I believe, along with many other constituents of the Woodburn Association of neighbors in Morgantown, that though the design proposed is a highly energy efficient building design, it falls short of what a truly green, sustainable design is. Site location should be a paramount decision when developing any design for a school and even more so when you claim to build a green school. Removing Woodburn School from its current community will have a negative impact on the community and counters everything the city of Morgantown is doing to preserve its neighborhoods.

The current Mon BOE proposal has chosen a site at the intersection of Highway WV 705 and US Highway 119 (Mileground Road). This is an outrageous site selection for a GREEN school. First, except for the children living in the adjacent trailer park, no can walk to this site if they wanted to. There is no sidewalk infrastructure to get to the proposed site. This road will soon become either a 4 or 5 lane superhighway—something not particularly suitable for bicycle traffic either (another consideration for green LEED credits). Additionally, you are disturbing a current greenfield and an undeveloped green space. LEED credit point Number 2: Development Density and Community Connectivity points to the importance in green design... ” to channel development to urban areas with existing infrastructure, protect greenfields and preserve habitats and natural resources.” This proposal does none of this. This credit is 4 points! There is no connectivity to neighborhoods. Though there are businesses close to the proposed school, none of them are examples of the basic services listed with this credit and furthermore there is NO way to access them by foot.

Credit 4.1: Alternative Transportation-Public Transportation Access’ intent is “to reduce environmental impacts and land development impacts from automobile use.” While a bus line runs past the proposed site, this site location screams for nothing but car access. It is located in the middle of an intersection of a 4-lane (possibly 5 lane) highway with no sidewalks. The WV DOH and MPO of Morgantown are proposing expanding the current road and all current proposals move the road 200-300 feet closer to the proposed school site. How is this sustainable design??? It is not. Increasing our kid’s exposure to automobile exhaust puts Mon BOE in a



liable position for increased health risks to our children. And one of the reasons for closing Easton Elementary is its horrible location at a difficult and busy intersection. So build a new school in an even worse intersection??

In closing, I want to reiterate that two of the LEED credits with higher point options will have the least consideration in this design. Gaining points in other areas without the significant consideration of Development Density and Community Connectivity falls way short in what a totally green, sustainable school should mean. The School Building Authority should have higher standards for green school design. Schools should be located in communities where current (NOT potential) housing exists. They should be put on sites where there exists an infrastructure (sidewalks!!) for more than 6 % (27 children) of the population to walk, whether they choose to or not.

There are other options open to Mon BOE. The current Woodburn School site and WVU property adjacent to the new Mountaineer Middle are two. There may be more with further discussions between communities, the city and the Mon BOE.

I ask you not to make a rash decision that will have long-term detrimental impacts on way too many people. Send this back to the drawing board and select a site that really shows what green, sustainable design means.

## **II. D. Against Consolidation; For Small Neighborhood Schools**

Tony Christini

*May 7, 2010*

*To Whom All It Concerns: Woodburn, Easton, Jerome Park, Cheat Lake and related school neighborhoods and areas, the City of Morgantown, Monongalia County, 705 and Mileground Commuters and Travelers, West Virginia University, and the Monongalia County Board of Education and School District*

Woodburn Elementary should not be consolidated into a big elementary school at the intersection of 705 and the Mileground or anywhere else. Woodburn Elementary, currently celebrating its 100 year anniversary, should be rebuilt and remain open in Woodburn because that's where the school children predominantly live, there and in neighboring Jerome Park, and because an overwhelming body of research shows that small neighborhood schools offer superior education and experience. Small neighborhood schools:

*improve student learning...reduce the achievement gap between poor and affluent students and minority students and whites...cultivate better student attitudes...cultivate better teacher attitudes...reduce discipline problems, truancy, and drop-out rates...better*



*engage parents in their children's learning and foster closer parent-teacher relationships...encourage walking to school and this improves children's health and active engagement in learning... (saveourneighborhoodschools.com Lawrence, Kansas)*

In 2009, University of Virginia researchers noted, in accord with the large body of research, "large schools no longer are regarded as the panacea for America's educational challenges. Many of the problems of public education, from low student achievement to high dropout rates, are being traced to large schools...."

In defiance of best knowledge and practice, the Monongalia County School District is pursuing consolidation, by stealth. No notice about possible school closing has gone home to parents through their schoolchildren. Many parents remain unsure of what is going on. Though everyone agrees that new schools at good locations are necessary for both Easton and Woodburn elementaries, the overwhelming majority of those who have publicly expressed opinion are opposed to the consolidation.

The proposed consolidation is now a large city, county, and university issue due to the school district's proposed intent to purchase land from WVU to build this big school at one of Morgantown's busiest and most congested intersections. The school has been nicknamed Congestion Elementary.

At a recent action, not only did anti-Mileground site demonstrators outnumber pro-Mileground site demonstrators 24 to 1 but anti-Mileground support from passing motorists outnumbered pro-Mileground support by several hundred to a few. So it is that the Woodburn Association of Neighbors has demonstrated most extensively the public's will on the matter by gaining hundreds of public car horn acknowledgements against the Mileground site for the proposed consolidation of Easton and Woodburn elementaries. Think that's laughable? It's far more than the school district has done.

**Even the lone pro-Mileground site demonstrator opposes the consolidation, like everyone else at the action. He too prefers two small schools (but thinks it won't happen).**

**That the school district is prepared to spend millions of its own dollars to obtain and prepare land for the proposed consolidated "green" school reveals that the district has sufficient funds to build one small elementary school currently.** Because the rest of the funding for the proposed consolidated school building construction *originates as federal stimulus dollars* means that the WV School Building Authority (SBA) may distribute those funds to school districts *according to their specific needs, as defined by the school districts*. Thus, the SBA could stipulate that the money they have designated for one big green school be used instead to build two small green schools. This is what the Monongalia County Board of Education should pursue, to serve the best interests of the students and the large general public affected by its actions in this matter. Rebuilding Woodburn Elementary in Woodburn and building a new school for Easton and Cheat Lake area students more central to their location best serves the public, and the students most of all.

The SBA must allow the green school funding to be split by the school district for two small green schools, or it must otherwise help fund the two small schools. Failing such SBA



funding, the school district should reject the grant for a big school and immediately begin the process of building or rebuilding one small elementary school with its own existing funds, then budget or acquire sufficient funds to begin building or rebuilding the other small elementary school the following year.

## **Notes on the expansion of 705 & the Mileground**

by Tony Christini

I attended the WVDoH informational workshop public meeting at the airport Tuesday evening (April 20). I had a long discussion with state workers about the 4 and 5 lane proposals. The blueprint-type copies handed out show that no matter which of the two options is chosen (the 4 lane with roundabouts or the 5 lane with a center turning lane), the road and traffic expansion will move the 705/119 (Mileground) intersection/roundabout hundreds of feet closer to the proposed school buildings. Instead of being surrounded by houses and two lane streets like Woodburn Elementary currently is, the proposed Mileground school will be surrounded by a four or five lane highway, a trailer park (that may or may not have a future), and a ravine. Given the impending road expansion, this will be uncomfortably similar to the current abysmal location of Easton Elementary: half surrounded by a high traffic intersection.

I was told by WV Department of Transportation officials that the school district would have to do a traffic impact study, and that they would have to pay for the drive linking the school to 705 and/or the Mileground. They could not say if 705, where school property would abut, would be a 15 mph school zone or not. (State law would have to be consulted, they said.) The linking school drive would definitely be a school zone, they said. Either way, school zone or at-speed traffic, it's a problem, in my view.

As regards the road: I would guess that the four lane road with roundabouts should go in. The state officials said it is much safer than the five lane: the difference between fender benders in the traffic circles versus relatively high speed deadly smashups from the turning lane. The businesses, apparently, basically want things to stay somewhat the way they are, though they would like to have some big merge lanes put in, and/or have Stewartstown road built up instead. They don't seem to want to give up any land to the extra lanes, especially the car dealerships. (For its part, the city would rather put the road somewhere else entirely, off the Mileground, but doesn't want to spend an extra \$20 million above the estimated \$40 million to do it, according to a 2 week old newspaper report.)

State officials told me nothing has been approved regarding road expansion, BUT that it is likely to happen, and to happen relatively soon, and that an "aggressive" start of construction would be next spring, though later in 2011 would be more likely, and that if the proposed Mileground school were built to be operational by Fall 2011 (as the school district apparently hopes) then it sounded to state officials that road and school construction might be simultaneous, or road construction somewhat after school construction.



I was told that the school has not yet submitted a traffic impact study that it must submit at some point by requirement. A school drive tie-in was reflected little or not at all in the state drawings. For example, I was told that a school drive would have to be directly linked into a roundabout (if roundabouts are selected by the state), and there was no reflection of this in the drawings. After the first “fender-bender” with a school bus in a roundabout, who gets sued? I wonder. Or, after the first deadly “T-Bone” with a school bus from the center lane of a five lane road, who gets sued then? Are there rules and regulations for situating schools near 4 or 5 lane road intersections? Has Monongalia County ever put a school in such a spot before? Has the City of Morgantown ever put a school near one of its busiest or most congested intersections (apart from Easton Elementary)? Who’s liable? WVU, for selling the land?

The safest road expansion (I’m told), the 4-lane roundabouts would not only greatly expand the 705/Mileground intersection, it would actually pick up the center of that intersection and move it closer to the proposed school buildings, apparently putting that intersection/roundabout about 1/3 closer to the proposed school – it seems more than a football field closer. That’s what it looks like on the diagrams presented and passed out at the meeting.

If the 5-lane option wins out, then nearly the same result. The center of the intersection gets picked up and moved closer to the proposed school, and is of course greatly widened further toward it.

The situation remains, the school district has taken two problems (the state of Easton and Woodburn elementaries) and made one big problem. Why on earth did they not seek funding for a green school for Easton/Cheat Lake students, thereby relieving the overcrowding issues at Woodburn, while working for other funding for Woodburn? Given the multiple constituencies they are aggravating, offending, and failing by planning to build a big school for small children near a busy and congested intersection, why do they not change course? Whatever the reasons, we need to keep applying pressure to force change.

## **II. E. Letter from Woodburn Neighbor and Parent**

To Whom It May Concern:

In 1999 I moved to Morgantown with my two young children to attend graduate school at WVU. Being new to the area, I searched for an affordable neighborhood with a small elementary school that my children could walk to. I moved to Morgantown from Switzerland and was searching for something like our situation there. Woodburn fit the bill perfectly. I am a homeowner, I love this neighborhood and the school. While it is not modern and it needs renovation, the building and site are a real asset to this neighborhood. The daily sights and sounds of children and their parents walking to school are something I treasure, along with the memories of my own children growing up here and attending Woodburn Elementary. Being able to use the track for walking and running during the evening and summer months is a real boon to the neighborhood as well. I shudder to think of what would become of the beautiful trees that should be preserved on that hill if the property fell into the wrong hands. The school provides a central focus for our



neighborhood. We need to preserve neighborhoods. We need to preserve Woodburn Elementary school. -- Jennifer Wilson

## **II. F. To WVU President James Clements and Members of the WVU Board of Governors**

April 26, 2010

Tony Christini & Katy Ryan

We encourage you not to sell to the Monongalia County School District the WVU land at the intersection of 705 and 119 (the “Mileground”) for the proposed large Mileground Elementary.

*How wrong would a Mileground school be?*

- **Not responsible:** A school on the congested chaotic business strip that is the Mileground is in no way appealing or appropriate.
- **Not “green”:** A school on otherwise undeveloped land near a 4 or 5 lane intersection is no green “showcase.” Quite the opposite.
- **Not community centered:** A consolidated school removed from the population centers of Woodburn/Jerome Park and Easton/Cheat Lake (with their basically stable student bases) fails to facilitate community and child well-being.
- **Not educational:** One big school to replace two small ones could not be more fundamentally educationally unsound, according to the overwhelming body of research.
- **Not legitimate:** The secretive and misleading school siting process could scarcely have been handled in a manner less befitting any public agency. The board barely made public the specific Mileground site a mere 7 days before unanimously voting to submit the proposal to the School Building Authority. This left the public essentially no time to understand let alone respond to the plan.

No surprise then that the proposed Mileground school has little or no visible community support. On the contrary, opponents of the proposed school remain highly visible and increasingly active at all levels, especially now that the site has finally been revealed. They are working to do well by the students and by the many other stakeholders, including parents, community members, and commuters on the highways. They continue to challenge and are intent upon stopping this proposal by way of local, regional, and state mechanisms. And they are joined in support by local businesses, local state delegates, and members of the Morgantown city council.

The Monongalia County School Board and the superintendent are essentially isolated in their decision to propose the Mileground consolidation. How could they not be? They revealed the location to the public a mere few weeks ago. They have operated in secret, in disregard of their proper role as public officials, and in disregard of the stakeholders: the commuters, parents,



many other community members, and the students not least. The board and superintendent have isolated themselves.

The school district has taken two problems (the state of Easton and Woodburn Elementaries) and made one big problem. Why did they neglect to seek or fail to secure funding for a green school for Easton/Cheat Lake students (in a location far more central to where those students live), thereby relieving the overcrowding issues at Woodburn, while working to secure other funding to rebuild Woodburn?

An overwhelming body of research shows that small neighborhood schools (of about half the size of the proposed large and remote Mileground school) lead to higher educational outcomes, especially for students of low income, who make up most of Easton and Woodburn Elementaries. This knowledge is well established. Some of the research has even been conducted in West Virginia. The Mon BOE completely ignores what is well known.

What else can the Woodburn Association of neighbors and other stakeholders do but insist that the proposal to build this school on the Mileground be denied? It's worth repeating:

- A) Relatively large and remote, this proposed elementary school is far from optimally educational, a factor evidently given no consideration by the Mon BOE.
- B) Taxpayers reasonably expect more when millions of dollars are spent, with decades-long impact.
- C) The proposed location at a congested high traffic intersection is unsafe and in the near vicinity of exceptionally high pollution. In various other ways, the location is not "green" and cannot be made so.
- D) The location would force Easton/Cheat Lake students to travel unnecessarily and wrongfully far by bus.
- E) The location would be aggravating and potentially treacherous to commuters on 705 and the Mileground, many of whom work at the hospitals, at Mylan, at the university, throughout downtown, and elsewhere.
- F) Additionally, the Mileground proposal impoverishes and undermines the Woodburn neighborhood of Morgantown by terminating its vital neighborhood school. (Unlike in other parts of West Virginia where schools are consolidating, the student populations in the areas at issue here are basically stable.)

Because there is precious little that is sensible, safe, "green," or educational about the proposed Mileground elementary school, the Monongalia County Superintendent and Board of Education, by their proposal, have failed to make a responsible decision. WVU should not assist them in this failure. While we may appreciate that they are trying to make improvements, we cannot accept the slipshod and brazen process or its result: an ill-considered and illegitimate proposal that is neither sound nor tolerable, and is potentially disastrous. The Mon BOE proposal for a



Mileground school is one that wishes to be “green,” wishes to be safe, wishes to be pro-education, and may even wish to be a legitimate expression of the communities and stakeholders involved. But it is not. It is none of this.

The proposed Mileground school would be half surrounded by a soon-to-be 4 or 5 lane highway, at one of Morgantown’s busiest and most congested intersections: a location that is uncomfortably similar to the current abysmal spot of Easton Elementary, itself half surrounded by a high traffic intersection. State transportation officials estimate that road expansion (not yet approved but highly likely, they note) would probably proceed simultaneously or soon after any school construction. This road construction would both move and expand the ever busier intersection to a point much closer to the proposed school site than it currently sits. Furthermore, if roundabouts are selected by the state for this 705/119 intersection, a school drive would need to be directly linked into the roundabout (according to transportation officials), which causes one to wonder, after the first “fender-bender” with a school bus in a roundabout, who gets sued? And what if the state builds instead the 5 lane option, which, they note, is more dangerous?

We ask you to encourage the Mon superintendent and school board to move in the following principled direction: sooner better than later, two separate schools should be funded and built, one on the Woodburn site, and one, the green school, likely on Stewartstown Road – more central to the Easton/Cheat Lake area, and where the superintendent has indicated land is available. The relevant officials and agencies must ensure that such high impact, long lasting projects are at least adequately conceived and properly carried out so that the needs of the students at Easton and Woodburn Elementaries are well met.

In announcing the approval of funding for the “green” school for Monongalia County, Director Mark Manchin of the WV School Building Authority notes that the controversy is site location. But the real problem all along has been and continues to be: consolidation – which is both unnecessary and unwarranted. The other problem is the failure to adequately seek and secure funding to rebuild Woodburn Elementary.

It’s great that Monongalia County will gain the green school. Let it be sited on Stewartstown road. Let Easton Elementary consolidate there with any school(s) but Woodburn Elementary. The school district must secure money to rebuild Woodburn. Unlike a number of other elementary schools, Woodburn has a great community location which should not be given up. Anyone involved in education should understand this and act based upon it. The superior value of small neighborhood schools, especially for children of low income, has been established overwhelmingly by university researchers far and wide, including in West Virginia.

The SBA did approve funds to build at least half a dozen elementary schools last April. Price tags for entire schools ranged from 3.3 million to about 6 million. Why can they not come up



with 4 million to rebuild Woodburn, decades overdue? Why did school district officials decide of their own accord to consolidate Woodburn out of existence? The school district must be encouraged to take a more principled approach. WVU now shares this responsibility.

If the Monongalia County superintendent and the school board move decisively and successfully in this direction, we will applaud them, and we will applaud you, and we will do so publically. Otherwise, we will rightfully denounce and fight this process to the bitter end. No 12 million dollar scarcely green school on the Mileground at one of Morgantown's busiest and most congested intersections. It must be sited more appropriately. And the small neighborhood school at Woodburn must be rebuilt.

## **II. G. Letter from Thomas R. Shamberger to BOE**

March 23, 2010

Dear Board of Education Members,

I am writing in opposition to the selection of the Mileground, as the site, for the replacement of the Woodburn Elementary School.

For areas that are zoned residential, it is a reasonable expectation that an elementary school is located in the neighborhood. Woodburn is one of the few neighborhoods, in Morgantown, that still has an elementary school located within walking distance of where people live. Families can live owning one automobile, enabling parents to also be involved without the need to drive to the school. One of the reasons we purchased our home in Woodburn, is Woodburn Elementary is located within walking distance.

Three sites were to be considered by the Board of Education, for a new school; the current site of Woodburn Elementary, the old University High property, and an unidentified location somewhere on the Mileground. For an urban environment, the first two sites are worthy of consideration. The Mileground site is not. This is to be a green school. Being green is to reduce the carbon foot print and promote sustainability. Having schools where people live is part of that strategy.

The Woodburn School physical structure needs attention. I believe that all parties agree that upkeep, renovation or replacement needs to be done at Woodburn. Woodburn Elementary should not remain in its current condition. The disagreement is choosing a location.

I attended a presentation at a state planning conference that focused on urban issues. One alarming fact presented was that if people live in neighborhoods that are economically



segregated, upward mobility virtually stops. Woodburn, Jerome Park and other older neighborhoods offer economic and social diversity that does foster upward mobility. Unfortunately suburban sprawl and large consolidated schools help create economically segregated neighborhoods.

I ask that you do further evaluation to consider sites, in the areas zoned residential in the Woodburn area in the city of Morgantown, and that the school not be moved to the Mileground. I ask that this letter be presented to the Board of Education at the meeting on March 23, 2010. Thank you for your consideration.

## **II. H. Letter from Linda Wessels, Morgantown**

It seems much of the controversy surrounding the siting of the proposed green school could have been avoided through better communication and coordination between the city, the county, the school system, and the developers. The lack of joint planning has forced us into a reactive rather than proactive position when it comes to our schools.

The Mileground is a bad location for a school, as many others have ably explained. A compelling case has also been made for keeping the Woodburn property in use as a school. In fact, when accurately evaluated according to LEED criteria, the Woodburn site comes out ahead of the proposed Mileground site. Let's build the green school there.

Although the siting of Easton Elementary may have made sense when the school was built in 19XX, it no longer does--it is now also a bad location for a school. Let's build Easton students a new school, too, one of their own located elsewhere within their attendance area.

Families moving to the new Heartland Homes development on Stewartstown Road, off of Point Marion Road, Magnolia Pointe on one side of West Run Road and the hundreds of town homes on the other will soon swell the numbers at Easton. The school system is not ready for this. The area's growing population requires a school of its own.

If building two new schools is not feasible, it would be more logical to absorb Easton students into the expanded Cheat Lake Elementary (which I sincerely hope will be split into two schools, one primary and one upper elementary) than to consolidate with Woodburn, since Cheat and Easton are both suburban schools that primarily feed into Mountaineer (formerly Cheat Lake) Middle, while Woodburn is urban and feeds into Suncrest Middle.

The school board seems to be grasping at straws with the Mileground school proposal. It would be better if the board made a well-thought-out decision and then pursued funding rather than letting the availability of a grant drive the decision making.



# III. COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLAN MEETING MAY 17, 2010

**III. A. Comments Delivered by Katy Ryan**  
**Associate Professor, English**  
**West Virginia University**  
**CEFP Meeting**  
**May 17, 2010**

My son is in kindergarten at Woodburn. There is no question that Easton needs a new facility and a new location. Right away. There is no question that Woodburn needs a new facility or a wholly remodeled one. And soon. I'm a teacher. I know that classrooms with ample space and decent equipment are essential. My son goes to kindergarten in a trailer with over 40 students. Teachers eat lunch in a hallway. We need new facilities. But this largely shared conclusion does not compel, in any reasoned way, consolidating the two schools and losing the Woodburn site.

Numerous studies document that small neighborhood schools have more parental involvement, less bullying, greater graduation rates, higher student participation in extra-curricular activities, and improved educational outcomes—especially for low-income children. (1) Given these studies and given the green movement toward smaller, not larger acreage, for public schools, the burden is on the School Board and Superintendent to justify its decision (not to focus on these two schools and to meet their different needs) but to consolidate.

Woodburn Elementary is positioned to lose two critical advantages, which schools around the country and the state wish they could get back: its smallness and its neighborhood. The benefits of small neighborhood schools are resoundingly clear. Achievement generally declines as overall school enrollment escalates, and according to some researchers this impact is even more pronounced at the elementary level. Again, the children hardest hit are those with the fewest financial resources.

Superintendent Devono has said that a 450-student school is not a big school. While no exact number can determine what constitutes “small” (small in Chicago is not small in Monongalia county), doubling school size is not an inconsequential move. (2) On average, Woodburn and Easton have slightly less than 200 students each. It's obvious that teachers who gather outside Woodburn after school know virtually every student. A 2003 study of 39 elementary schools in Missouri found that the schools with enrollments of “less than 200



achieved the highest . . . scores in all the five academic areas of reading, math, language, science, and social science.” (3) (If Woodburn hasn’t achieved high score numbers in recent years, let’s figure out why without surrendering a needed advantage we have.)

Long before I read about it or knew it was an object of study, I experienced the vital, informal support network that springs up around a community school. Walking home, my son and I have met students from every level at Woodburn. Students are frequently at our house after school and at the Woodburn playground on weekends. A few nights ago, a 5th grader knocked on our door, just stopped in for an hour or so to hang out with us. He’s having some trouble, and we talked about that—and he played with my son. Maybe I would have met him at a consolidated school to which he and my son are bussed—but I wonder. I’m trying to teach a first-grader, whom I also met walking home, to play the piano. Older siblings have been borrowing books for school reports. My son in turn has met adults he trusts and from whom he learns.

One article I read mentioned that students at neighborhood schools have “lower feelings of alienation from the school.” (4) This might seem like a vague finding, but I worked for years with young people in the court system—and every one of them felt alienated, and from an early age, from school. A sense of community, a supportive neighborhood, a school that you can walk to, is a no-cost benefit to students. It shouldn’t be treated so cavalierly.

Not all Woodburn students live in Woodburn, but for many, including some from Jerome Park, the surrounding neighborhood matters a good deal. And I would argue that the neighborhood has a positive impact on *every* student in subtle and more obvious ways. Proximity to the school keeps parents connected and allows me to volunteer more than I would be able to if I had to drive. It was from a conversation with a parent walking from school that I learned about the proposal to close Woodburn. So, my involvement came from the very thing that is in jeopardy now: the neighborhood school experience.

Woodburn is a place. I can’t say it any better than a 7th grader and a graduate of Woodburn did at one of our neighborhood meetings. She said, “It’s about a culture.”

Nancy Walker has said that parents tend to get sentimental about school closings and make a big ruckus and then the new school opens and the kids all run to the shiny swing sets and are happy, and she knows they’ve done the right thing. What kid wouldn’t be excited by a new playground? But I don’t think that should be the measure of whether we are making responsible decisions about our children’s education.

I have not yet heard an *educational* rationale for closure and consolidation. (And there may not even be a convincing financial rationale. Apparently, West Virginia has not saved any money from its past fifteen years of school consolidations.) I am bothered by the implication that kids handle this kind of change better than their parents and that those opposed to the closing of Woodburn are motivated by sentiment, not facts. The facts about community schools are all on the side of two small schools—one relocated, one rebuilt on its current site. My heart is certainly in this, too. We know better and we can do better.



1. For summary, see Robert M. Bastress, "The Impact of Litigation on Rural Students: From Free Textbooks to School Consolidation," *Nebraska Law Journal* 82.1 (2003): 40 n. 163.
2. See Gregory C. Malhoit and Derek W. Black, "The Power of Small Schools: Achieving Equal Educational Opportunity through Academic Success and Democratic Citizenship," *Nebraska Law Journal* 82.1 (2003): 75-76 n. 115-115.
3. John Alspaugh and Rui Gao, "School Size as a Factor in Elementary Achievement." *Educational Resources Information Center*. 28 Apr 2003.  
[http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/1a/ef/16.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/ef/16.pdf)
4. Malhoit 79.

### **III. B. Comments delivered by Thomas R. Shamberger on May 17, 2010**

Keep elementary schools in the residential areas of Morgantown, specifically Woodburn and Suncrest Primary. Suncrest should not be converted to a pre-K only, and should continue with multiple grades.

Woodburn Elementary needs replaced or renovated. I do not think that there is disagreement on that point. The site for replacement should not be on the Mileground. For areas that are zoned residential, it is a reasonable expectation that an elementary school is located in the neighborhood. Currently residential zoning exists in municipalities and full consideration should be given to support elementary schools in these areas. Some of these residential neighborhoods should have a school within walking distance of where the children live. Hopefully someday the county would also look at zoning as a means of planning land use that will help the Monongalia County School Board plan schools. Until then, please do not leave the towns who have given you a land use plan.

Parents can live in Woodburn and be involved in Woodburn school as volunteer, room parent etc., and be able to walk to the school. Some families do not have two and three automobiles. Not all families can afford two cars and schools in walking distance of their home is a major benefit to helping them be involved in their child's education. It was pointed out at a recent meeting that parent involvement is way down in the newer consolidated schools. Putting a school on the Mileground would make it harder for parents to be involved, who do not have a car, and further reduce parent involvement. Apparently parent involvement is reduced, in consolidated schools, even with those who do have cars.

Building sites, that are selected, should be stable. The new site selected by the Board, for the consolidated Woodburn/Easton school is on property that is most likely undermined. One



statement given a few weeks ago was this site was the only parcel, in the area, that was not undermined; however later on other information indicates that it is mined out. There appear to be questions about the stability of the proposed Woodburn/Easton site on the Mileground.

### **III. C. The Neglect and Abuse of Woodburn Elementary**

Delivered by Susan Eason at the CEFM Meeting on May 17, 2010

Superintendent Devono and members of the Mon County Board of Education:

I am here tonight to say it is time to stop the neglect of Woodburn Elementary. I absolutely support a new facility for the dedicated Woodburn students, teachers and staff! It's about time. I do not, however, support a consolidated school, or a school on the Mileground.

The neglect and abuse of Woodburn students has gone on far too long. It is time to do something or "terminate your rights" for the care of these children. At a Feb. 25th meeting of forty plus Woodburn residents with Dr. Devono, Nancy Walker and Joe Statler, Walker commented, "For 14 years I have been wondering what to do with Woodburn." Fourteen years is too long, Nancy, and unacceptable.

Parents and staff begged for years that the BOE provide a building for PE, art and music so that the 200 children in this school would not have to do these activities in a 20 by 20 foot square hallway or their classroom. It took years to finally get this facility, and came only after Dr. Devono's arrival. However, the project began in 2007 and the parking lot created to afford space for the new building is still not complete!! A flurry of activity erupted two weeks ago after parents signed a letter pointing out the lack of handrails on stairs and lack of grading to the ground around the lot. After that one day, no further work has been done and the railings are still incomplete. The neglect continues! I could tell you more stories of neglect where children must wear coats in the school due to extreme cold or where in other areas windows must be opened due to extreme heat or where a teacher must make a decision between an air conditioner running or being heard while teaching.

These are not conditions any of us want for our children and staff. And yet, for years, the Woodburn teachers and staff have labored hard and long to provide an excellent education, *despite* the neglect from the Board of Education.

The case can easily be made for a new school. After years of neglect, there is no question change is needed. However, consolidating Woodburn students with Easton and putting them in a school on the Mileground only continues the neglectful care and administration you have showed thus far.



- Do not move our children to a congested, polluted area of our city on the Mileground and call this school a green school.
- Do not move the school out of a community where a significant percentage of the children walk to school with their family each day and more could if they chose to, and even more could if an investment in infrastructure was made that allowed them to.
- Do not close a school that is an anchor to its community and a stabilizing force for families, similar to the Suncrest argument.
- Do not move these children into a larger facility when all the latest research shows that small schools are better for children, especially low-income students, of which Woodburn has a high percentage.

In a study published by *Nebraska Law Review* in 2003, Bob Bastress, Professor of Law at WVU reviews the extensive literature on the educational and community benefits of small schools. One summary notes:

Small, rural and urban neighborhoods can offer community naturally....When the school is an interwoven part of the community, both are potent educators....By separating schools from communities, consolidation may be contributing to the social problems that concern parents and educators. The sound development of children is closely linked to the well being of communities. Consolidating schools often destroys those links.[1]

The glitter and glamour of a green school has all our attention. Who wants to turn their backs on a school that has high indoor air quality? Or lowered energy costs? No one, but the reality is that ALL schools should be designed this way in this day and age. It is not unique; it's becoming standard.

This is why I believe you should go back to the drawing board and design two small schools—one for Easton close to its population and one for Woodburn/Jerome park children. This approach is what is truly green and in cited studies often **no** more costly.

The City Council of Morgantown in its February 25 letter to President Walker captures additional sentiments of mine for why we should keep Woodburn in its current location. Mayor Byrne writes: 1. It is important to provide elementary and primary school options for families that choose an urban lifestyle. This includes parents who don't drive a car and those who prefer to walk; 2. Retaining schools in their urban location encourages re-development, neighborhood stabilization, and positive community impacts. (And I would add, especially a positive impact on the families who have children in your schools); 3. This is an opportunity to develop compact urban schools using an urban scale of development, avoiding a sprawl.

The Comprehensive Education Facility Plan you propose is not acceptable. Design a school for Woodburn students and staff built on its current site using an urban scale of development



measure. A new green school for the Woodburn students and hard laboring teachers and staff on its current site is a beginning step in ending your cycle of neglect.

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[1] Jim Fanning, Rural School consolidation and Student Learning, ERIC Doc. No. ED384484, at3-4 (1995), available at <http://ericir.syr.edu>.

### **III. D. Delivered at CEF Meeting by Chris Haddox, LEED AP, Woodburn resident and Woodburn parent**

5/17/2010

Dear Superintendent Devono and members of the Mon County Board of Education,

The past eighteen months, especially the months since November, have seen so much activity around the futures of both Woodburn and Easton Elementary Schools that in preparing my comments for this evening, it was difficult to even know where to begin. I've decided to begin with the simplest observations of what is right and wrong about the entire situation.

It is right that the collective conscience of the Mon County Board of Education has finally had enough of the deplorable teaching and learning conditions it has allowed to exist at both Woodburn and Easton schools. It is right that the Mon County Board of Education is interested in exploring green avenues for dealing with the question of "what to do about Woodburn and Easton?"

For me, that is where the "rights" end and the "wrongs" begin.

It is wrong to assume that a half-baked consolidation plan, conceived largely in secrecy during the past few months, that will potentially place a large elementary school at the intersection of 705 and Mileground is a suitable answer to the question. Much less a green solution. It is wrong for several reasons:

1. It is wrong because it was formulated by an agency of the public without significant public awareness or input.
2. It is wrong because it ignores the impacts of the entire school enterprise upon the community at large. The school enterprise necessarily considers community wide ramifications such as development patterns, which areas grow and which decline, due to the placement and removal of schools. Both the Council of Educational Facilities Planners International and the US Environmental Protection Agency cite the importance of smaller, neighborhood schools on neighborhood stabilization--stabilization that is internationally recognized as key in curbing the unplanned, automobile dependent sprawl that is largely driven by the removal of schools from municipal centers to their fringes.



3. It is wrong because it ignores research findings about the importance of small schools on educational outcomes and social development of elementary age school children.
4. It is wrong because it presumes that a green project can be measured by the performance of the building only, and that the other aforementioned ramifications on the community at large can be ignored. WVU has been approached to provide building design expertise, yet where is the land use planning expertise?
5. It is fiscally wrong and unsafe because the Pittsburgh coal seam underlying the Mileground site is extensively undermined as per the Board's own engineering report. It favors a purchase price of \$2.275 million dollars and the spending of additional monies, perhaps millions as with the UHS location, to stabilize a site that according to the engineering report has a "very high potential for subsidence." A report that as of the Tuesday, May 12 BOE meeting, has apparently not been digested by all BOE members.
6. It is wrong because the Board publicly and wrongly discounts the potential for reutilizing the existing Woodburn site: a site that is not underlain with the Pittsburgh coal seam, is already owned by the Board of Education and for the past 100 years has held a school quite nicely. Yet, in its application for funding to the SBA, the Board notes that utilization of the existing site is indeed a possibility. Is that existing site the Woodburn site or the Easton site?
7. It is wrong because it is happening in isolation from several key comprehensive planning exercises that are currently underway or slated to begin soon, including the Morgantown Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Strategic Plan, the Morgantown Housing Study, the WVU 2020 Strategic Plan and the WV DOH/MPO plans for designing a solution to the Mileground traffic problems.
8. It is wrong because it pressures the public to say "yes" to a half baked plan as the Board has \$8.6 million of SBA money essentially in hand. For the community to say to the Board, "let's go together back to the drawing board" creates the possibility of the Board having to go back to the SBA and say, "no thanks...not at this time."

What, then, to do? The options are clear to me:

1. Go back to the School Building Authority and tell them we can do better. Request additional latitude in spending the funds we have. Bring your oft touted and obviously strong relationship with the School Building Authority to bear on this issue.
2. Go back to the School Building Authority with a solution that is equitable to Easton families and their neighborhood and a solution that is equitable to Woodburn families and their neighborhood. Look to the literature for examples of thinking outside the box. They are out there. Take a tip from sustainable design luminary, Amory Lovins, and ask, "what box?"



3. Make your jobs easier by fully engaging the communities your decisions will impact. If it were not obvious before, perhaps it is now. There are talented and dedicated people willing to get involved. You can choose to be on the receiving end of their opposition, and there is plenty to oppose, or on the receiving end of their time and talents.

To engage the stakeholders takes effort far above that expended while stumping for the Board. It cannot be done with a few generic, cryptic flyers sent out a couple of days in advance of equally mysterious meetings. It takes multiple opportunities to sit down as equal partners around a table where the seriousness of the agenda is clear to all. Consider that at the October, 2009 CEFPP meeting at Morgantown High School, 8 Woodburn representatives, two of which were children, comprised a significant portion of the participants, most of which were school administrators and teachers.

Engagement and creativity takes time, effort and input from multiple stakeholders. If the true desire for creative solutions is present, however, teams will come together and creative solutions will emerge.



## ***IV. DOMINION POST***

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

*Dominion Post* June 13, 2010

#### **BOE SHOULD COME CLEAN ON CONSOLIDATION**

**BY MARK BRAZAITIS**

Instead of selecting Woodburn Elementary's current site for the new consolidated Woodburn-Easton school, Monongalia County's school board has chosen a location on the Mileground. This shows incredible foresight because such a location will better prepare our children for the kind of future we hope for them.

The 450 students who will fill the new consolidated classrooms will now have easy access to:

■ **Hot Spots:** The sooner our children learn how to gamble, the better prepared they will be to sell sub-prime mortgages and work on Wall Street.

■ **A strip club:** Nudity sells, and exposing our children to clothes-optional businesses will instruct them that it isn't brains but other body parts that are their real assets.

■ **Traffic:** What's the advantage of school buses spending

hours navigating the most congested area of Morgantown? Students spending quality time in cramped quarters with their classmates, of course.

Instead of being home 10 minutes after the bell rings, as they would at Woodburn, students will have the opportunity to sit on the bus and compete to see who holds out the longest in asking, "Are we there yet?"

What are the disadvantages? Well (cough-cough-cough-cough) nothing, unless learning first-hand about the dangers of air pollution and its connection to respiratory illnesses count as a disadvantage.

Why did members of the school board, at their June 8 meeting, decide to ignore the sensible, thoughtful and imaginative proposal of Chris Haddox, a



Woodburn parent who showed how easily, and beautifully, a consolidated school could be built on the Woodburn location?

Do they care about the students who would be exiled from a close-knit neighborhood school setting and bused (slowly, achingly) to what is essentially a bustling (and, in some instances, hustling) business location?

Nancy Walker, the school board chair, said she must consider the views of others beside the huge number of Woodburn and Easton parents — and children. — who would like a safe, quiet, and accessible neighborhood setting for the consolidated school. Who, exactly, are these other people whose views need consideration? Why have they been largely absent from the public conversations about the consolidation issue? Why do these absent or even nonexistent others get to decide what hap-

pens to someone else's children?

Members of the BOE have never explicitly stated why the Mileground location makes more sense than the Woodburn location, either for the children who will attend the consolidated school or for the citizens of Morgantown who will have to contend with additional traffic in a location that during peak travel hours (before and after school being two of them) can make the Los Angeles Freeway seem like a lonely country road.

Members of the BOE should either reverse their decision on the Mileground site or come clean about who is influencing their misguided position and resign.

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**MARK BRAZAITIS** is an associate professor in WVU's Department of English. He lives in Morgantown. This commentary should be considered another point of view and not necessarily the opinion or editorial policy of *The Dominion Post*.



**MAIL LETTERS** to the editor to: *The Dominion Post*; 1251 Earl L. Core Road; Morgantown, WV 26505. E-mail letters to: opinion@dominionpost.com. Include your name and phone number for confirmation purposes. Letters should not exceed 300 words.

### **Why should we settle for less for children**

I must respond to Claudia Thomas' letter to the editor (DP-June 3). Her child attended Woodburn Elementary this year, making her aware of the poor conditions and challenges facing teachers and students.

She notes it is time Woodburn children receive a new facility. I couldn't agree with her more. What I and many others contest is the Board of Education's proposed location for a new facility and its desire to consolidate Woodburn and Easton schools.

I attended and spoke at the May 17 BOE Comprehensive Educational Facility Plan public hearing. At least 15 people came to the microphone to address the new school and Woodburn/Easton consolidation. Not one of those who spoke was opposed to the creation of a new facility for students. Where opinions differed was on where a new facility should be sited and whether one large school or two smaller schools situated more appropriately in each school's catchment area should be built.

I am one of the people, hav-



ing signed a petition, who opposes a new school located on the Mileground. The BOE told Woodburn residents that the Woodburn site is not viable for a new building. On Tuesday, residents presented architectural drawings at the BOE's public meeting that show two options for how a school can be built on the Woodburn site. It would require the BOE to seek an acreage waiver from the state School Building Authority (SBA). Although members of our Board told us the SBA would not consider a waiver for the Woodburn site, SBA director, Mark Manchin told me and other Woodburn residents in April that is not the case.

I believe, as Morgantown City Council has also indicated to BOE President Nancy Walker, it is important to keep school options for families that choose an urban lifestyle and that retaining schools in their urban location encourages redevelopment, neighborhood stabilization and fosters positive educational impacts.

No, I am not against a new facility for the children. I do, however, advocate for the greenest option — building two new smaller schools. One at the Woodburn site and another in an area more closely connected to homes of Easton's children.

Why should we settle for less? Or do county residents believe it is a done deal and these hearings are just another box for the BOE to check off on the road to *their* plan?

**Susan Eason**  
**Morgantown**



*Dominion Post June 10, 2010*

## **School consolidation can be done sensibly**

Long-neglected Easton and Woodburn elementary schools are in terrible shape. There is no dispute about the need for new facilities. The question is how to proceed. The answer so far provided by the local school board and superintendent is consolidation and the loss of the Woodburn site — an answer driven by sudden grant money rather than educational vision and long-term planning.

Two new small schools, located in each catchment area, would be far better. Small schools in residential areas have more parental involvement, less bullying, greater graduation rates, higher participation in extracurricular activities and improved educational outcomes.

A sense of community, a school that more than a few [students] can walk to, is a no-cost benefit to students. Because no one factor determines how a student will do in school, we should work to provide as many advantages as possible.

We can ignore the research, double school size, buy overpriced land, relocate into traffic and pollution, rely on teachers to work miracles, and be dazzled by a new playground. But why?

A new small school should be built on the existing Woodburn site. If the schools are to be merged for uncertain financial reasons, a larger school could be built on this site. We would lose the smallness but preserve the surrounding community, which also impacts students' well-being.



Instead of spending millions of dollars to purchase land on the Mileground and an unknown amount to deal with reported undermining, the school district should invest in what it owns or at least choose a site less stupid than the Mileground/W.Va. 705 intersection.

**Katy Ryan**  
**Morgantown**

### **Honor to attend encore of PHS commencement**

It was a distinct pleasure to attend the recent graduation

### **Thanks to all for hand in Woodburn event**

On May 22, Woodburn Elementary School held its 100-year celebration. The planning of this celebration has been going on for the past year. I would like to thank the teachers, staff and students from the Woodburn school and the Woodburn Association of Neighbors for making this event so wonderful.

Keith Reed, Morgantown High School's Band director and a resident of Woodburn kindly brought a pep band to kick off the festivities.

Former Woodburn students Jeff Davis, Brian Reed and Logan Shamberger were part of the pep band. Principal Linda Nakaishi extended a warm welcome to everyone for coming. Students sang songs, a visual presentation of old photographs was shown and attendees were invited to tour the buildings and have refreshments.



Current and former students, ages 5-89, shared their “celebration” of learning.

The halls were filled with chatter of and laughter about experiences from students, parents and teachers.

Former homeroom moms and dads shared their involvement experiences in the school; some with multiple children were involved for years.

I had to smile when students reflected “how small” the school felt ... maybe the students had just gotten bigger!

The identification of former students and teachers in old photographs brought back more stories and memories. As several students reflected:

“We had one teacher that taught everything ...”

“The cooks were wonderful and shared produce from their own gardens for lunch...”

Parents just pitched in when needed ...”

I couldn’t help but feel that this was a great example of what community is all about. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this event a success.

**Marti Shamberger**  
**City Councilwoman**  
**June 2, 2010**



*Dominion Post* June 2, 2010

## **Missing administrators noticed at Woodburn**

On May 22, I attended the 100th Birthday Celebration of Woodburn Elementary.

It was a wonderful event.

As I looked around the gymnasium and did a walk-through of the school, I was truly impressed by the projects of the students that were displayed everywhere.

I must commend the faculty and staff for their dedication and hard work in making this such a huge success.

There was a small program at the beginning of the celebration where the students who were present sang "America the Beautiful" and "Country Roads."

There is nothing quite like hearing a group of children singing these two songs.

Many members of the Woodburn community, including faculty, staff, neighbors, parents of students (past and present), former students, former employees and three members of the [Monongalia County] Board of Education, Nancy Walker, Mike Kelly and Joe Statler, were in attendance to enjoy and celebrate the success of this small school.

Noticeably absent were administrators of the Monongalia County Schools. It was a shame that [superintendent] Dr. Frank Devono, Donna Talerico [assistant superintendent of pupil services] and Becky Mattern [assistant superintendent for administration, curriculum and instruction], who did not take the time to stop by and see what an excellent education is being provided to the students of Woodburn.

My congratulations to all the employees and the people who have provided a wonderful learning experience for for the children of Woodburn Elementary School.

**Mary Ann Seckel  
Morgantown**



## Effort to close school affront to community

**BY TONY CHRISTINI**

The attempt by the superintendent to close Woodburn Elementary is a scandal and an outrage. To close Woodburn would be scandalously anti-educational for the students, and it would be outrageously negligent to the community. An overwhelming body of studies show that small schools and neighborhood schools lead to superior educational outcomes, in general, and especially so for children of low-income families — who happen to make up nearly two thirds of the students at Woodburn Elementary. The superintendent is taking his infrastructure problem and making it the problem of the community and of the children. This undermining of education and neighborhoods threatens surrounding areas and weakens the city as a whole.

The superintendent is trying to consolidate Easton Elementary and Woodburn Elementary into a large school at a spot he refuses to disclose, somewhere by the Mileground — that abomination of failed zoning and periodic gridlock. Woodburn parents would be forced to bus the many students who now walk. Woodburn residents would see property values fall, and the school-based community of a century broken. There is

no visible community or parent support for closing the school.

So, it's the superintendent against the community and parents. It's the superintendent against the education of the children. And if the superintendent does not know the educational fact of the matter already, or if he refuses to believe it, he can and he should look it up. He can look at both the case study research and at the Woodburn data on educational outcomes. His push to remove the school from its neighborhood is a dereliction of duty because it is anti-educational, as the research shows.

The superintendent should heed the concerns of student education and of the community, and he should redirect his efforts accordingly. While his manners were impeccable in meeting with the neighborhood, his attempt to close Woodburn is tyrannical and destructive to both the people and place. He is acting egregiously, in complete disregard of educational outcome, vital social consequence and community will.



One plausible option is to fix the problems of Easton Elementary first, in a way that alleviates Woodburn's main problem: overcrowding. The district could build a small local school for students in and around Easton that would include the students being bused from that general area to Woodburn. In this way, some or all of the overcrowding at Woodburn can be alleviated. Then solve the other major problems that Woodburn does have, but do so by keeping the small neighborhood school, and the children, right where they belong, and the community the way it belongs.

If the superintendent insists on bullying through his plan then the school board has no responsible option but to vote, "No," thereby rejecting the plan in its entirety. Pushing through this plan against Woodburn is doing double dam-

age, because it not only creates a bigger problem, it allows long-standing existing problems to go unaddressed.

Having failed to convince the community with any vital facts, the superintendent and school board president have attempted to baffle people with technicalities and irrelevant details, even a recital of data that makes a mockery of a school relocation, such as, where the main bulk of students actually come from: Woodburn itself, and next-door Jerome Park.

If the school board fails to vote down the superintendent on this issue, they themselves should be voted out by the people. There's no excuse for this travesty, this selling out of the children, the community and the city.

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**TONY CHRISTINI** is a resident of the Woodburn community. His son is in kindergarten at Woodburn Elementary School. This commentary should be considered another point of view and not necessarily the opinion or editorial policy of *The Dominion Post*.



### **Don't allow developers to get Woodburn site**

I am writing as a native of Morgantown and a Woodburn Elementary alumnus.

Obviously the ideal situation, both educationally and environmentally, would be to have two smaller schools [to replace Woodburn and Easton elementary schools] located geographically closer to the areas where these children live. Based on my experience working on many construction projects for clients, I know this option is possible and the cost would be close to or less than the amount of money planned on being spent to construct a new large [consolidated school] building.

But this option is based on renovating the existing buildings.

I have included a link to the elementary school located in my neighborhood, in Tucson, where the Tucson Unified School District has successfully renovated a historic structure (built in 1927) to accommodate the education of the students in the immediate area:

[http://edweb.tusd.k12.az.us/Sam\\_Hughes/Abouthughes.html](http://edweb.tusd.k12.az.us/Sam_Hughes/Abouthughes.html)

What has not been taken into account by the people who want the 100-year-old Woodburn school torn down to build another is the enormous cost it will take to demolish that structure. For those of you who were not living in Morgantown when Morgan-town Junior High School was torn down to build the police station [the Public Safety Center] at the corner of Spruce and Walnut streets, you are not aware of the amount of over cost for its demolition alone, because the original structure was so solidly built, it



took more time and money than was anticipated.

The Woodburn school has survived 100 years and it will survive a lot longer than any newly constructed building. If the [Monongalia County] BOE is truly concerned about the education of its students, then they will choose to have two separate, smaller schools. This will provide a more personal education experience and would benefit the children and the Morgantown community, which I presume is the objective of the state education system.

As an idealist, I am interested in decisions being made regarding Woodburn and Easton schools which consider the best option for school children and the Morgantown community. The proposed Mileground location has many flaws, including the fact traffic is already a mess without a planned school to house more than 500 children. The pro-

posed four-lane road with roundabouts or five lanes is a start, but does not solve the long-term problem until a truly comprehensive plan is implemented for Morgantown. In addition to expanding the Mileground, a bypass needs to be constructed which takes the majority of the traffic problem from the growing Cheat Lake area and diverts it away from the Mileground completely.

But as a realist, I am resigned to the fact the Board of Education is going to do whatever it wants, which looks like it will be the Mileground site. The Woodburn neighborhood needs to concentrate its efforts on making sure the Fortney Street site does not get into the hands of developers and ensure the building benefits the community.

**Lori Tanner**  
**Morgantown**



but I don't think they are "hurting" for guns.

This is bad legislation in the best of times, much less now.

It's not a matter of revenue this time around but principle. I don't think most voters would consider this bill to be the reason they went to the polls.

Maybe common sense really is on life support.

**Michael P. Furnari**  
**Morgantown**

### **Woodburn Elementary must stay where it is**

I have been reading the forwards from everyone in the community, and I agree that the school needs to be here.

I, too, enjoy watching the students walk to school and wish I had that opportunity when I was growing up. While I don't have children now, the fact there was an elementary school in sight of my house did influence my decision to purchase a house in Woodburn.

I can look out three of my windows and read the sign for Woodburn Elementary and it reminds me of my own grade school — it was a red brick building, too.

I want to join the cause to preserve the school and the education that is housed there. It is a perfect location in one of the best neighborhoods in Morgantown for a school. Why take away from what is already here?

One of my favorite things to do in the mornings when I first moved to Woodburn was to watch the children filter through the pleasant neighborhood to school.

Education is the foundation on which we will build a future Woodburn, Morgantown and America ... so why destroy it? It seems the BOE will blindly have its way, and that is a real burden to Woodburn, Morgantown and West Virginia.

How can we build our neighborhood and deplete the future? It doesn't make any sense at all to move the school. The school, to me, is a beacon of our community.

Take the school away and we have a couple bars to bring notoriety to the community. Destroying the school really gives me second thoughts about raising a family in Morgantown.

In a near-perfect neighborhood, removing the school seems like the most imperfect idea. Keep Woodburn School here, please.

**Anthony Barker**  
**Morgantown**  
March 25, 2010



## **ARTICLES & COMMENTARY**

*The Dominion Post* June 9, 2010

### BOE reiterates support for Mileground site

Some in Woodburn  
still oppose location  
for new green school

The Monongalia County Schools Board of Education unanimously reaffirmed their support of the proposed Mileground location for the new green school.

The new site is pending closure of Woodburn and Easton elementary schools and the adoption of the county's Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan. The BOE voted 5-0 for the measure at its Tuesday meeting.

The meeting drew heated debate between BOE President Nancy Walker and a room packed with people who support building a new school at the current Woodburn site. Woodburn resident Chris Haddox brought a proposal outlining how a school could be built at the site.

During a presentation by Ted Shriver, vice president of architectural firm Williamson Shriver, audience members laughed and made comments after a few of his statements — such as when Shriver said the new school would be within walking distance of several businesses.

Walker spoke firmly to the crowd, saying the BOE listened respectfully during their speech and she asked for the same respect for Shriver.

Later, Walker said the BOE had to consider more than just what those in attendance wanted.

"It's not just about the Wood-



burn neighborhood,” Walker said.

The BOE has to consider the Easton community, as well as limitations of the Woodburn site’s size, she said. Walker also she would like to have a locale that everybody agrees on, but it doesn’t exist in Morgantown.

“We would love to have something everyone loved,” she said.

Haddox said he was “sick and tired” of hearing “we can’t” from the BOE. At a few points during the meeting, Walker asked Haddox to sit down, but he refused. Later, he said he didn’t want to

make it seem that he didn’t care about the other groups.

“I do care about Easton students and parents,” Haddox said.

The discussion about the different sites for the new green school lasted for two hours and 15 minutes.

The BOE will vote later this month on whether to close Woodburn and Easton schools. The state’s School Building Authority has committed \$8.6 million to the project.

Shriver gave a presentation about the 19 different sites that were considered.

Some of the sites were additional ones along the Mileground, the intersection of West Run and Stew-



artstown roads and areas along Hartman Run Road.

But 14 were thrown out for a variety of reasons, including an unwilling seller or the site being on a floodplain.

They narrowed the list to five, then four viable options. Site A was the current Woodburn site, site B was an area below the old University High School, site C is the proposed Mileground location and site D was also off the Mileground.

“It is my recommendation that site C be selected for the new elementary school,” Shriver said.

Haddox presented a plan to build a three-story, 52,000-square-foot facility at the current Woodburn site. The school would be on the current playground. There would be no eminent domain, but they have a willing seller where a parking lot could be built.

The presentation was to show the BOE there was a way to construct a school for 400 or more students at the current Woodburn site, Haddox said.

“We can do this if we want to,” he said.



## Neighborhood wants new school at old site

**BY J. CHRIS HADDOX**

Morgantown may soon be facing a unique opportunity: The development of a new, high-performance school facility that would combine Woodburn and Easton elementary schools.

The state School Building Authority (SBA) controls the purse strings for the majority of school building projects and it is dangling a multimillion-dollar carrot in front of local boards of education, encouraging them to put forth their best proposals for the development of a "green school" within their county.

The SBA is requiring the proposals by mid-March and will announce the winning rabbit in mid-April of this year. Given the economic outlook for the next several years, the Monongalia County Board of Education is understandably interested in the offering and has taken steps toward generating a proposal it feels would find favor with the SBA.

As the SBA follows the state Board of Education's policies for determining appropriate building sites, those steps taken by our BOE have been largely focused on identifying a new site and eliminating the current Woodburn site from consideration for this green project.

The main strikes against the Woodburn site are reported to be that it is too small for a school, too hilly, would be difficult to develop and that Mark Manchin, the executive director of the

SBA, does not like it. Thus, our superintendent will not include the Woodburn site in his pitch to the SBA.

At the meeting of the Woodburn Association of Neighbors (WAN) on Feb. 25, the superintendent said that if the county's BOE does not submit a proposal for the carrot now, we will go to the bottom of the list and may not have another opportunity for several years.

### **Integrated design**

While I applaud both the SBA for its green school initiative and the local BOE for its interest in developing a green school, I use the carrot and rabbit language to question the wisdom of the short time line and to suggest that the development of a high-impact project such as a school should not be a race to the finish line.

If there is one key concept that describes the development of a green project, whether a school, business park, housing development or other, it is integrated design.

Integrated design recognizes that a stone tossed into a pond generates countless ripples that ultimately, and at differing levels, affect the farthest fringes of the pond. A project that strives to be a green project must be founded on an in-depth consideration of its ripples.

In the case of a building project, the ripples are the long-term social, environmental and economic impacts resulting from its development. Such ripples cannot be adequately assessed over the course of a few months.



When viewed through the lens of integrated design, a school is no longer a stand-alone educational facility whose sphere of concern focuses only on 180 school days and WESTEST scores. In integrated design, a school is an educational facility that serves as a model for future development and redevelopment of the community landscape. Under this concept the site is as important, if not more important, than the structure that gets built upon it.

Under this concept it is understood that such a building built on an inappropriate site falls short of its maximum positive impact. Under this concept the development of a project that involves the displacement of a key stabilizing component from a neighborhood and the subsequent creation of a new, automobile-dependent facility on the fringes of that neighborhood is hardly a green project and is hardly in the best long-term

interest of that neighborhood and the larger community in which that neighborhood exists.

### **Meeting of the minds**

Realizing that Woodburn would sooner or later be on the chopping block, the WAN approached the BOE about the redevelopment of a green school on the present site, knowing that such a project would involve a lengthy and in-depth consideration of numerous factors — that was 18 months ago.

At that meeting, with Superintendent Frank Devono and BOE President Nancy Walker, WAN presented its rationale, highlighting both the SBA's announcement of its green school initiative and national fervor around green schools. "What a time to begin formulating plans, to begin focusing on 'what ifs' instead of 'why we can'ts,' " we proposed.



Expressing their unfamiliarity with the initiative, Devono and Walker failed to see that perhaps some stars were beginning to align.

In October 2009, 15 months after we broached the topic of a green school on the current site, WAN received notice that the BOE was considering going after SBA funds for a green school and they would like to send two members to meet with a small representation from WAN.

At a Nov. 4, 2009, meeting, some key points emerged.

■ First, the BOE was exploring the reuse of the Woodburn site and the BOE representatives were relieved to learn that keeping a school on the existing site was the main focus of WAN — not necessarily keeping the existing building.

■ Second, the BOE pointed out what we heard before, that seven acres was the preferred size for a school to handle 450 students, the size they were hoping to build (the Woodburn site is about 4 acres).

■ Third, the BOE was concerned about transportation infrastructure.

■ Fourth, this thing was on the fast track as described above. Follow-up conversations ensued and the city prepared overlay maps to help identify possibilities for the systematic acquisition of land from willing sellers around the site to help the site eventually meet preferred guidelines.

But stories began to leak out that the BOE was looking at

## Morgantown

land “nearby” and with each passing day it became clearer that trying to craft a meaningful proposal for the Woodburn site was not a BOE priority.

Throw in the BOE's questionable attempts at gathering public input during the Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan process and its resulting executive summary recommendation to consolidate Woodburn and Easton on a new site (even though the board says this will only happen if they receive the SBA funding), and you have the makings for an understandably skeptical reaction from the community that the Woodburn site was ever in the running in the first place.



### **'We can do better'**

Where does this leave things? In mid-April the BOE will learn whether or not SBA wants to reward our county the carrot. If so, the BOE will likely vote to approve Devono's recommendation that Woodburn and Easton be consolidated on a new, as of yet undisclosed site, presumably on the Mileground.

Perhaps it will be a high-performance building in terms of energy efficiency, water efficiency and indoor air quality — all extremely important things I support.

Additionally, it will likely provide a very nice space for learning. Some of the unintended lessons may include how to build a school in an area where less than 5 percent of the students will be able to walk to school as opposed to a site where 25 percent of the students could walk, how to focus on the short term instead of long term and, perhaps most importantly, how to operate from a position of "we can't" rather than from a position of vision, persuasiveness and ingenuity.

What can we, as citizens of one of the only counties in our state experiencing growth, do? We can stand up and say, "We can do better."

We can contact our BOE and remind them of what they know: Creative solutions to complex issues don't happen overnight.

We can contact Manchin at the SBA and let him know that the short time line is hindering all carrot chasers from developing truly green proposals and that the SBA is therefore undermining its own attempts at soliciting outside-the-box proposals.

We can look beyond our own beloved hills and see how communities all over the world are using the groundswell of interest in this topic to give energy to their own initiatives.

We can let the BOE know that the Woodburn site, as well as the old UHS site, the mystery site and others should be openly evaluated by the same yardstick — a yardstick that includes an in-depth analysis of the siting decisions ripple effect on neighborhood vitality, quality of life, transportation costs and future development patterns of the greater Morgantown area.

We can suggest to the city of Morgantown that such an analysis reasonably falls within the scopes of both the upcoming Comprehensive Housing Study and the Comprehensive City Plan.

Or, we can rush into a project and hope for the best.

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**J. CHRIS HADDOX** is a visiting assistant professor of sustainable design at WVU. He lives in Morgantown. This commentary should be considered another point of view and not necessarily the opinion or editorial policy of *The Dominion Post*.



*The Dominion Post*  
Feb 26: 1-A

# Woodburn fights to keep school

## Plan would close facility

Members of the Woodburn community asked Monongalia County Schools officials to consider building a new school on the site where Woodburn Elementary stands now and keep the small-school setting in mind when developing it.

Roughly 50 people gathered Thursday night to voice their concern over possible closure of Woodburn Elementary. Superintendent Frank Devono, Board of Education President Nancy Walker and BOE Vice President Joe Statler attended.

A draft of the executive summary for the county's Comprehensive Education Facilities Plan (CEFP) recommended Woodburn Elementary and Easton Elementary be closed and consolidated, and that a new school be built on a new site. A CEFP is required by the state every ten years.

Devono estimated the new school's cost at \$12 million and said any construction is at least 18 months to two years away.

The board is trying to get funds from the state's School Building Authority (SBA) to construct a new school. The SBA has to approve school building projects. The BOE needs to provide some preliminary architecture ideas and a potential site when they make a presentation in late March.

Many people, though, expressed hope that the current Woodburn

SEE **SCHOOL**, 2-A  
**BY ALEX LANG**

*The Dominion Post*

## SCHOOL

site could be used to build a new school. They said they liked the fact students can walk to the school, and several purchased their homes because of their proximity to the school.

Karen Woodfork, a Woodburn resident, was one of those people.

The students also like the small-school feel that Woodburn offers, Woodfork said.

"They just feel comfortable," she said.



But district officials said using the site would be challenging.

The site is difficult because of its hilly terrain, Walker said.

SBA Executive Director Mark Manchin said the current site wasn't a viable option, Walker said.

The district is negotiating for a new site within a mile of Woodburn Elementary, Walker said. They did not reveal the location because negotiations are ongoing. While several community members pressed them on the potential new home — and expressed frustration over not being told the locale — the district did not reveal it.

But at the end of the meeting, Devono did say they could look again at the Woodburn site. He said he plans to ask the BOE at the March 9 meeting, to allow him to instruct the architectural consultant to evaluate the Woodburn site as well as land at the old University High School.

There was also concern about the speed of closing

the school.

"Let's step back," local resident Chris Haddox said. "Let's slow this process down."

Haddox said they wanted more time to evaluate sites and to see if they could come up with creative ideas to use the current Woodburn land.

Devono said he was concerned money could become an issue if they delay. There are fears about budget cuts in the future because the SBA might not have money to give to build new schools.



*The Dominion Post*  
May 2, 2010

## Some Residents Unhappy with Plans to Close Woodburn

As Woodburn Elementary officials are busy planning their 100-year celebration, many people are upset about plans to close the school.

The state's School Building Authority approved a plan Monday to build a green school in Monongalia County on Mileground Road. Both Easton and Woodburn elementaries would be closed, and those students would attend the new school.

Many Woodburn community members expressed a desire for a small, community school. They cited studies that show students learn better in small schools and voiced concerns about the school size if Easton and Woodburn are consolidated into one facility.

Karen Woodfork, a Woodburn resident, was one of those with concerns.

The students like the small-school feel at Woodburn, Woodfork said at a Feb. 26 neighborhood association meeting.

"They just feel comfortable," she said.

Some members of the Woodburn community also expressed a strong dislike for the new school location. They worry about the congestion a new school will create along an already crowded roadway.

Several people also expressed a desire to keep Woodburn Elementary at the current site. They even brought in an architect to show how a new school could be built at the same location.

Finally, residents also expressed angst with the speed of the process.

"Let's step back," local resident Chris Haddox said at the February meeting. "Let's slow this process down."

*The Dominion Post*



## Former students react to consolidation plan

Former Woodburn Elementary students love the community school and said, while they realize the building does have some problems, it provided them with a unique educational experience.

"The school is an ongoing part of our community and we're losing that nucleus," said Logan Shamberger, a former student.

Shamberger and other former Woodburn students have concerns about the the school's potential closure.

Monongalia County Schools is looking at a site on Mileground Road to build a new school that would combine Woodburn and Easton elementaries.

Woodburn has a diverse population and small enrollment, Shamberger said, which helps the students get to know one another. Shamberger is now 17 and a student at Morgantown High School.

"Being a student at Woodburn was a unique experience," he said.

He also said the teachers at the

school were some of the nicest he has had. They were always quick to compliment him and when they provided criticism, it was done in a friendly, helpful way.

Another former student, Tess Halverson, agreed with Shamberger and said she enjoyed her time at the school.

Halverson said she used to walk to school, and she got to know all of her classmates because the class was so small. That setting made everyone feel close to everyone else.

"It was a lot more comfortable being in a smaller environment," Halverson said.

While the structure does have some problems, Halverson said she never lacked classroom space. When she was attending the school, she only wished they had a gym, but now the facility includes one.

If the school does move, Halverson said, the current Woodburn residents would no longer be able to walk to school.

And with a larger school, Shamberger said he is worried that Woodburn's intimate feel would be lost.

"It feels more like a personal experience," Shamberger said, of his time in the small-school setting at Woodburn.



# V. INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL CREATED BY CONCERNED PARENTS OF WOODBURN

V. A.

## WVU Cash Grab

Here's the \$2.275 million question: Why would the Monongalia County School District pay WVU (College of Agriculture) \$2.275-2.6 MILLION to site the Woodburn/Easton consolidation on WVU's 7 or 8 acres at the Mileground intersection with 705? Never mind, for the moment, that WVU's Mileground intersection site is a horrible location. Why pay the university millions for land when, as Woodburn supporters demonstrated at the recent board meeting, the school district could build the school on land it already owns, the great Woodburn community site?

A view of Easton/Woodburn school (450 students) built on revitalized Woodburn grounds:



Even if the school district would sell off the four-acre abandoned Woodburn site for a million or more dollars, that still leaves a substantial amount of money being lost to the purchase, at least a million dollars or considerably more, and being lost to deal with undermining ...for nothing the district needs. Never mind the 705 screaming loud intersection strip for children, and the increased congestion for the community and parents, and the further unconscionable school expansion possibilities there. Can such an unnecessary transfer of funds even be legal?

From *The New Woodburn Community School* <http://newwoodburncommunityschool.org/>





# DID YOU KNOW? WOODBURN SCHOOL IS CLOSING

if the Mon County Board of Education has its way

1. The BOE has maintained all along that it could not use the current Woodburn site for a new school. However, the official proposal that was funded by the SBA clearly indicates that rebuilding on the current Woodburn site is an option (**SOURCE:** Mon BOE NEEDS proposal to SBA dated September 23, 2009).
2. The current Woodburn site does not have the Pittsburgh coal seam underneath it and is not subject to the same subsidence issues as any site on the Mileground (**SOURCE:** Dr. Alan Donaldson, former Chair of Geology & Geography at West Virginia University).
3. The proposed/preferred Mileground site at the intersection of 705 and the Mileground is severely undermined and has "a very high potential for subsidence." (**SOURCE:** TRIAD Engineering report to the Mon BOE dated March 9, 2010).
4. The Mon BOE planned to spend \$1,178,189 to fill old mine works on the UHS site and ended up spending an additional \$695,936.90 before they could even start work on a building. (**SOURCE:** Mon BOE Certificate for Payment to Howard Concrete for UHS mine grouting).
5. The lack of information along with the misinformation released by the Mon BOE has made it very difficult for meaningful citizen input. A few examples:

Statement by the project architect, Ted Shriver, that it didn't appear that the proposed Mileground site was undermined (**SOURCE:** Made at the March 23, 2010 BOE meeting). This statement made publicly even though the TRIAD Engineering report stating otherwise was in hand).

Statements and presumptions made by the architect and BOE members that the SBA would not consider the Woodburn site and that the process of requesting a waiver to the preferred site size requirements was a drawn out process that had not been successful (**SOURCE:** said at the March 23, 2010 BOE meeting). The SBA later indicated that waivers have been granted and that the process of requesting a waiver requires only a letter to the SBA attached to the proposal. (**SOURCE:** meeting between SBA Executive Director and three Woodburn residents on April 12, 2010)



Board member e-mail information supposedly being on the BOE website, but it was not (**SOURCE:** May 12, 2010 BOE meeting. Verification on May 13, 2010 confirmed with the Superintendent's office that the information was NOT on the website).

Information about the Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan supposedly sent home with students, yet both Woodburn and Easton confirmed nothing had gone out as they were waiting on information from the BOE (**SOURCE:** Conflicting stories uncovered in conversations with Woodburn administration and Dr. Frank Devono on May 12, 2010).

Faux site review process that allegedly gave fair assessments to the existing Woodburn site, the old UHS site on Willey Street and the "site near or along the Mileground" as it was then being referred to. Information was withheld, including the exact location of the Mileground site and geo-technical information about the Mileground area site (**SOURCE:** from review team members who severely criticized the "review" process as bogus and a farce; TRIAD Engineering report for the site located "near or along the Mileground.")

6. The SBA wants to build a green school in Monongalia County and thinks that a school project with a net result of closing two neighborhood schools in favor of a new consolidated school on a previously undeveloped site that is 98% transportation dependent is somehow a green project. A high performance building can be built anywhere.....green is much more than just a high performance building.

7. The removal of neighborhood based schools in favor of fringe based larger schools is a primary cause of sprawl.

8. This new project is happening without any coordination with several major planning projects underway in Morgantown, including the City Comprehensive Plan, the City Comprehensive Housing Study, the Downtown Strategic Plan and the WV Department of Highways planning process for dealing with Mileground traffic. In fact, the WV DOH only recently learned of the BOE plan to situate a school on the Mileground.

9. Community based schools are critical for maintaining and stabilizing neighborhoods.

10. The Council for Educational Facilities Planners International recommends neighborhood based schools over fringe based schools and recognizes that much of the country is turning away from consolidation and larger schools in favor of neighborhood based schools.

11. The US Environmental Protection Agency echoes the recommendations of the Council for Educational Facilities Planners International.

12. Neighborhood schools are safer, have more parental involvement and allow for greater after school use of the facility. The BOE states they want to do what is best for the children. Destabilizing the neighborhood our kids live in by removing the school is hardly in line with doing what is best.



## V. C. Elementary School Size in Monongalia County, 2005-2012

Data compiled from the Monongalia County School District web pages show that in the past 5 years (2005-2010) the number of elementary schools has shrunk from 15 to 11, and the average elementary student body size has increased by 55 percent. During those same five years, the total elementary student body has increased 13 percent. All else the same, consolidating Woodburn and Easton would drop the number of elementary schools from 15 to 10 in the seven-year period of 2005-2012, for an average increase in elementary school student body size of 70 percent, in seven years, district-wide. *Figures compiled from Monongalia County Schools ([boe.mono.k12.wv.us/](http://boe.mono.k12.wv.us/))*

### Monongalia County Elementary School Enrollment, 2005 & 2010:

SCHOOL	ENROLLMENT 2005 – 2010	% CHANGE
Arnettsville Elementary	89 - cons	n/a
Brookhaven Elementary	438 - <b>454</b>	<b>4% incr</b>
Cass Elementary	227 - cons	n/a
Cheat Lake Elementary	570 - <b>644</b>	<b>13% incr</b>
Daybrook Elementary	79 - cons	n/a
Easton Elementary	111 - <b>176</b>	<b>63% incr</b>
Mason Dixon Elementary	351 - <b>344</b>	<b>2% decr</b>
Mountainview Elementary	629 - <b>758</b>	<b>21% incr</b>
Mylan Park Elementary	n/a - <b>491</b>	n/a
North Elementary	619 - <b>700</b>	<b>14% incr</b>
Ridgedale Elementary	285 - <b>403</b>	<b>41% incr</b>
Riverside Elementary	197 - cons	n/a
Skyview Elementary	n/a - <b>452</b>	n/a
Suncrest Primary	164 - <b>257</b>	<b>57% incr</b>
Waitman Barbe Elementary	88 - cons	n/a
Westover Elementary	267 - cons	n/a
Woodburn Elementary	210 - <b>227</b>	<b>8% incr</b>
total	4324 - <b>4906</b>	<b>13% incr</b>
average student body size for the 15 schools in 2005 and the 11 schools in 2010	288 - <b>446</b>	<b>55% incr/5yrs</b>
average given Woodburn-Easton consolidation by 2012 [all other data unchanged]	288 - <b>491</b>	<b>70% incr/7yrs</b>
average for the Morgantown area [minus Mason Dixon and Daybrook Elementaries] 2005-2010	300 - <b>456</b>	<b>52% incr/5yrs</b>
average for the Morgantown area [minus Mason Dixon & Daybrook Elementaries] 2005-2012	300 - <b>507</b>	<b>69% incr/7yrs</b>



**V. D.** [Note: Concerned that Woodburn parents remained largely in the dark about the school district's plans for closure and consolidation, Susan Eason and Katy Ryan asked on May 25 that the school district approve the following letter to be sent home to parents. On June 2, we learned that the letter had not been approved. The Superintendent sent word that he would communicate with parents his own memo. This memo arrived on the third and second to last day of class amid a flurry of end-of-the-year materials and did not have the street address for the June 8 meeting. The following is the letter that was denied for distribution to parents.]

**To Woodburn Parents:**

**The Mon County School Board proposes closing Woodburn and consolidating with Easton.**

Everyone agrees that Woodburn needs to be massively upgraded or totally rebuilt. The question is how and where.

α Would you like a new school in the Woodburn or Jerome Park neighborhood?

α Would you like a new school on the existing Woodburn site?

α Do you prefer the small student body or would you prefer consolidation with a larger student body?

α Are you in favor of consolidation, or opposed, or don't care as long as the school site is good?

α Do you want to send your children to school on the Mileground at the intersection of 705 and 119? Or would you prefer your children go to a new school at a different site?

**PLEASE ATTEND THESE IMPORTANT MEETINGS TO DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS**

**Mon County School Board to Discuss Possible Sites for a New Woodburn School**

June 8 at 7:00 PM

13 South High Street

Open to the Public (chance to speak at the beginning of the meeting)

**Public Hearing on Closing Woodburn**

June 24 at 6:00 at Morgantown High School (open forum)

Come to the meetings to let your voice be heard, to make your values and opinions count.

If you would like more information or to be part of an informal discussion about the school proposal, contact Katy Ryan ([kohearnr@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:kohearnr@mail.wvu.edu)); 304.381.2296.



# VI. Woodburn School Initiative Timeline

- June 9, 2008 Woodburn Association of Neighbors (WAN) representatives met with Dr. Devono and Nancy Walker at Crosley's to outline our vision for a new green school. We brought the SBA's green school initiative to their attention. BOE reps outlined concerns over site size being able to handle a larger school. Mayor Justice and City Manager Boroff were to meet with Dr. Devono for further discussions.
- Aug 28, 2008 WAN minutes show that Justice/Boroff/Devono/Walker meeting occurred and "wasn't positive." BOE reps said a new school for less than 300 students was unlikely. No talk (at least to us) of a Mileground school or consolidation of Woodburn/Easton. (Minutes available)
- Oct 13, 2009 Mon BOE votes unanimously to proceed with applying to the WV School Building Authority (SBA) for funds for a LEED design school project in Mon County.
- Oct 20, 2009 First CEFP meeting at MHS. Attendance was very small.
- Oct 26, 2010 Mon BOE annual countywide Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) meeting sparsely attended. Board member Harvey expresses disappointment that not more parents are in attendance. Many parents did not know about the meeting.
- Nov 1, 2009 Mon BOE applies to WV School Building Authority seeking funds for a LEED Certified school.
- Nov 4, 2009 Ron Justice, Mayor Byrne, BOE members Kelly and Statler, Councilpersons Spencer and Shamberger, Chris Haddox, Donna Hartman and Andrea Soccorsi met at Crosley's to discuss the BOE's desire to pursue a new green school. BOE members outlined a timeframe indicating the SBA would consider projects in mid-April 2010 and that the BOE needed to have a completed proposal to SBA by mid-March, 2010. Statler asked if the neighborhood was dead set on keeping the existing building and the answer was no, to which Statler sighed some relief.
- Nov 19, 2009 Follow-up meeting at Crosely's with Bill Byrne, Donna Hartman, Chris Haddox, Ron Justice, Marti Shamberger to view map overlay of properties that fall in the 7-acre area around Woodburn prepared by Chris Fletcher.
- Nov 2009 At some meeting this month, the School Board voted to amend the CEFP to reflect the closing of Woodburn and Easton. **This vote is not in the publicly available minutes.** On December 16, 2009, the state BOE approved the amendment. According to the SBA Handbook, "major revisions to the CEFP [including closings]. . . are to be submitted to the SBE



and the SBA by December 1 each year." So—approx two weeks before the deadline in the final year of the ten-year CEFP, the BOE instituted a major change.

- Dec 8, 2009 Met at Crosely's (Haddox, Byrne, Shamberger, Hartman). Byrne outlined apparent support for UHS site from both BOE and WVU. Shortly thereafter, Byrne reported that BOE would not support the site.
- Jan XX, 2010 Chris Haddox, Ryan Hess and Michael Mills of the Mills Group walk the Woodburn site to ponder how it could be used for a newly constructed school.
- Jan 2010 Second CEFP Community Dialogue held.
- Jan 16, 2010 WAN Woodburn School task force met and determined that BOE was going to forge ahead.
- Feb 1, 2010 WAN met to bring everyone up to speed on proposed new school and the CEFP. WAN member and member of the Mon County CEFP Steering Committee shares with the group her frustration with the CEFP process, specifically lack of true input from the steering committee. WAN decided to call a meeting with BOE at the Woodburn School. (Minutes available)
- Feb 25, 2010 WAN meets with Dr. Devono, Nancy Walker, Joe Statler. Devono outlined the finances. **When asked why the BOE could not leave Woodburn out of the Easton equation, he flatly said our student numbers were needed for the proposal.** WAN asked the BOE to partner in hiring Michael Mills to do site drawings for a 450-student school on the current site. They explained they couldn't do this due to time and need for it to go out to public bid, but Devono said he would ask the Board to vote in favor of him asking hired architectural firm, Williamson and Shriver to do a site analysis of the current Woodburn site and property adjacent to the old UHS site. (Minutes available)
- Feb 25, 2010 City Council approves a letter from the city to be sent to Mon BOE saying the city supports keeping schools in neighborhoods in the city.
- March 9, 2010 WAN members went to the March 9, 2010, meeting of Mon BOE and asked the Board to approve Devono's request to ask Williamson and Shriver to do the site analysis. The Board voted in favor of this. Architect Ted Shriver was at the meeting and said he would put together a survey that would ask folks to rank the three sites using rankings similar to the UHS siting. The Board made it clear they didn't want one site revealed. They said they would ask "site evaluation committee members" to sign a confidentiality waiver. They said the site evaluation committee would be made up of 2 community reps and 4 staff/faculty from each school.
- March 11, 2010 Shriver's office e-mailed the site review analysis (attached). The group is asked to rank 3 sites...the current Woodburn site, the old UHS site and the site described only as "near or along the Mileground" according to 17 criteria. The "analysis" was to be completed and returned to the architect by close of business the next day. There was not one bit of objective data and the location of the preferred site was not divulged.... [how can you even begin to make a



comparison?]) Haddox completes his and attaches an addendum with his notes about the subjectivity and uselessness of the survey. [Was taxpayer money spent on this farce just to pacify the public?]

March 23, 2010 The BOE has a special meeting to review the results of the site analysis. No surprise that the site "near or along the Mileground" was the clear winner. At the meeting, Haddox presented a 10-point argument against the BOE's proposal to the SBA. A copy of those points was given to the secretary.

Mon BOE minutes show:

"Upon the recommendation of Superintendent Devono, a motion was made by Vice-president Statler, seconded by Board Member Kelly, and passed unanimously to approve the Mileground site for the construction of a new school that will accommodate the students currently assigned to Easton Elementary School and Woodburn Elementary School with the following consideration: 1. The Board and WVU agree upon terms for the conveyance of the property from WVU to the Board, and 2. The WV SBA approve funding for the construction of the new school, and"3/ The Board approve the closure of Easton and Woodburn Elementary schools and: 4. The West Virginia Board of Education ha pre-approved the amendment of the district's Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan to reflect the closure of Easton and Woodburn and the construction of a new school on the Mileground. It is further moved that the Board reserve the option to select a more desirable school site should such a site become available for acquisition by the Board." (Mon BOE Minutes, March 23, 2010)

Around March 29, 2010

A member of Governor Joe Manchin's staff called Susan Eason/Chris Haddox to say she has received word through a family member and letters to Governor Manchin that Woodburn residents are opposed to the consolidation of Woodburn and the proposed building of a green school on the Mileground Road. Eason returned the call and learned that Mark Manchin has been informed of these concerns. The staff member reported to Eason that Manchin would be willing to meet with a group from the Woodburn Association. The SBA will meet on April 26 to vote on proposals, so make arrangements soon. The staff member mentions it would be most helpful to take a WV State delegate to the meeting.

April 6, 2010 Eason called SBA Director Mark Manchin to set up a time to meet. Manchin explained that the group should meet soon, before April 14, as that is when the agenda and his recommendations for submitted proposals will be sent out. He mentions he will be in Morgantown for a meeting to talk about green design the next day. He ponders having us meet him after that 2:00 p.m. meeting but then decides he would not have enough time to give to our concerns as he has to be in a meeting in Fairmont. Eason and Manchin talk at some length about the concerns that the process is moving too quickly, has had little opportunity for community input and that the proposed sight has very little sustainable or green qualities about it. Over the phone, Eason learns that acreage waivers can easily be requested with any proposal and that it is the SBA that grants those waivers at its discretion. Eason and Manchin make plans for members of the Woodburn group to meet in Charleston on Monday, April 12 at 11:30 a.m.

April 6, 2010 Susan Eason conveys to Chris Haddox that Mark Manchin will be meeting with a colleague of his on April 7 at 2:00 p.m. to discuss green building. Haddox sends an email request asking if he might attend this meeting with Manchin. Haddox is welcomed.



April 7, 2010 Chris Haddox attends small meeting with Mark Manchin, not realizing until arrival that it would also include Dr. Devono and a representative of a major construction company. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss interest in incorporating alternative engineering technologies into the Mon BOE proposed green school building. At that meeting, Dr. Manchin expressed his enthusiasm over this project and that the SBA would find the money to make this work. [Recall, this is prior to the SBA meeting to decide on the proposal.]

April 12, 2010 Susan Eason, Tom Shamberger and Chris Haddox meet with Dr. Mark Manchin of the WV SBA in Charleston. Among matters discussed were the site size waiver process and the timeline of the proposal. Also, the SBA's view on green design was challenged. It was acknowledged by both Manchin and the Woodburn group, that having the LEED Accredited Professional architect as the only filter for pulling off a green vision was conflicted since the architect stood to get 6-7% of this project and he was more in a position to deliver what the BOE wanted, rather than bring a larger vision to the project. We asked what guidelines for green design the SBA gives to the local school boards. They said they had none other than the requirement that a county board hire an architectural firm with a LEED AP architect. Manchin stated that the Green Funding program was only two years old and still evolving. Manchin went on to say it was late in the game to be having this discussion and that he foresaw absolutely no reason why the SBA would not approve this project for the \$12,000,000. He also countered BOE President Nancy Walker's claims that the SBA said it would not consider the current Woodburn site as a possibility. As he put it, "Dr. Devono called to tell me that President Walker threw me under the bus."

Additionally, en route to the meeting in Charleston, the group gets wind of talk of that the BOE is looking at another possible site on the Mileground (WAJR show with Bob Bell).

April 13, 2010 Haddox and Shamberger, along with other Woodburn residents, attended the BOE meeting. Haddox reads a letter crafted in response to the meeting with Dr. Manchin.

April 15, 2010 Eason is invited by Kay Murray to be on WAJR to share about the Woodburn resident's meeting with SBA director, Mark Manchin. BOE president Nancy Walker calls in to give her perspective. (pod cast available)

April 19, 2010 WAN holds its regular meeting. Group decides to organize a protest against the proposed green school site on the Mileground for Friday, April 30. (Minutes available)

April 19, 2010 Eason sends email to WVU President Clements asking for an update on the status of the sale of the land to Mon BOE. On April 21, Sr. Associate VP for Finance, Dan Durbin, responds saying, "In short, there is no "deal" at this point. While the University has expressed an interest to sell property (we have several parcels of property across the county) to the BOE at fair market value, no specific parcel of land has been agreed upon in writing by both parties."  
Daniel Durbin  
Senior Associate Vice President for Finance

April 20, 2010 Tony Christini attends the WV Department of Highways and Morgantown Metropolitan



Planning Organization (MPO) public hearing regarding the expansion of Mileground Road into a 4-lane or a 5-lane road. Christini learns that either option will move the road 100-200 feet closer to the proposed school site. Also learns the Mon BOE will need to do a Traffic Impact Study. View plan at <http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/engineering/comment/wv705connector/Pages/default.aspx>

- April 23, 2010 Eason and several others send letters/emails to SBA and Governor Manchin opposing the site location and consolidation of the proposed Green School.
- April 26, 2010 Woodburn Association of Neighbor members are encouraged to email President Clements and members of the WV BOG asking them not to sell WVU Farm land to Mon BOE. Four or five that we know of send letters.
- April 26, 2010 The SBA awards Mon County BOE \$8,618,400.00 toward the \$15,566,021 school project for a green school on the Mileground.
- April 27, 2010 Frank Devono and Becky Mattern appear on WAJR to discuss CEFPP and Green School. Devono states they are looking at purchasing nearly 7 acres from WVU for \$325,000/acre, but there are other site considerations. (pod cast available)
- April 28, 2010 Tony Christini from WAN invited by Kay Murray to speak on WAJR about the planned protest of the Mileground site. (pod cast available)
- April 29, 2010 BOE candidates begin appearing on the WAJR morning talk show. Board member Parsons states that the BOE has not ruled out sending some Easton kids to Cheat Lake.
- April 28, 2010 Marti and Tom Shamberger talk with BOE member Barbara Parsons after a candidate's forum. They ask Parsons if the application that was submitted by Mon BOE had contingencies for site plans. She said it did. Tom explained to her the conversation with Mark Manchin saying that if the site on the Mileground wasn't chosen then the application had to be resubmitted.
- April 29, 2010 Members of the Woodburn Association of Neighbors meet with a WV House Delegate to convey concerns about the consolidation of Woodburn and the site selection on the Mileground.
- April 30, 2010 Members of Woodburn Association of Neighbors hold a protest at the intersection of WV 705 and the Mileground (US 119) to create awareness about the poor selection of site. Twenty-four people attend from 3-6 p.m. One counter protester, Dr. Chuck Whiteman from Easton attends with his own sign showing favor for the school. (He agrees that the best solution would be two small schools.) A Face Book page, No More Traffic on the Mileground and a website, www.Milegroundmadness.org were created to help promote the cause.

May 2, 2010 Folks who sent emails to WVU President and Narvel Weese, VP for Finance, receive the



following email:

Susan,

West Virginia University has agreed to and will continue to explore various land options with the Board of Education. The University has committed to consider various sites and therefore believe we have an obligation to continue those discussions. While I am supportive of your position to maintain a Woodburn neighborhood school, the University would encourage you to work with the Board of Education. The University views the location of the new school as an issue for the Board of Education and the community at large. Thanks for bringing your concerns to our attention and best of luck as you pursue your goal maintaining a school in the Woodburn neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Narvel

Narvel G. Weese, Jr.

- May 3, 2010 Haddox emails Mon BOE asking to view the full proposal, geo-technical analysis for the Mileground site or if not done, plans for when that is to be done, contingencies around the land purchase, and cost figures of site related over-runs on UHS and Mountainview schools. He emails WV SBA asking if there is a minimum size school student population requirement for receiving SBA funds and what the formula cost per square foot for an elementary school is.
- May 5, 2010 Haddox calls BOE to see if request is in process. Gets message that the web person is tending to a family illness and has not gotten to the request. Later calls and learns that Dr. Devono has replied with e-mail. Devono reports they are gathering the information for Haddox to see at the Board office next week.
- Haddox left phone message with WV SBA asking when his request would be considered.
- May 12, 2010 Haddox picks up information from BOE office and talks with Dr. Devono and Randy Graft (project manager for BOE projects). Haddox learns of a geotechnical assessment for the Mileground site that was dated March 9, 2010 that states site has a "very high potential for subsidence." Haddox had asked for this information when participating in the "site review analysis" on March 12, but it was not provided. Haddox also sees in the BOE proposal to the SBA that the site is not secured AND that a worst case scenario would be to build on the existing site (something the BOE said could not happen and that the SBA would not approve). It appears that the BOE is trying to give themselves an out for keeping the money if the preferred site does not come through.
- May 12, 2010 Woodburn residents meet with WV Delegate and attorneys Bob Bastruss and Todd Phillips to discuss the situation.
- May 17, 2010 CEFPP public meeting. 25 speakers take the microphone. Many are from Suncrest speaking in favor of small, neighborhood based elementary schools and keeping theirs open. The Superintendent has verbally indicated he will not recommend the CEFPP proposal to convert Suncrest Elementary into a pre-K facility. Woodburn arguments are much the same as Suncrest, yet the Board members and the folks from Easton School claim that nostalgia is the reason Woodburn residents are fighting for their school. No one from the Woodburn



contingent has used nostalgia as a valid argument. All speakers on the Woodburn topic indicate the need for a new facility. Some favor consolidation, others do not.

May 18, 2010 Ryan emailed her public comments to Barbara Parsons, who was not present at the CEFP hearing, and cc'd the Board asking for confirmation that the BOE email address directed mail to each Board member. No response as of June 14, 2010.

May 21, 2010 After unsuccessful attempts to get information on the program for the new school, Haddox heard from the architect, Ted Shriver, that a program does not yet exist. All he can say is that the school will be around 50,000 sqft and that he has some ideas about program, but will wait until the closure hearings to share that. How many other Boards of Education that applied for SBA funding were afforded that opportunity?

May 24, 2010 Haddox requests info from SBA as per below. **Has not rec'd reply as of June 14, 2010.**

Dr. Paine, Dr. Manchin and Mr. Sneed,

I am requesting copies of the Mon County BOE full proposal that was recently funded for \$8.6 million. I would like to see the full proposal and all accompanying documentation that was submitted. The 6 page proposal I received from the Mon BOE seems hardly adequate for such a competitive process, especially in light of the conversation between Dr. Manchin, myself and two others from Morgantown on April 12 in Charleston at the SBA offices where Dr. Manchin stated that the applications have to be very thorough. The Mon BOE application does not appear to have included any program for the proposed school facility and no land had been secured. That the BOE is now considering other parcels of land other than the two identified as potential sites in the SBA proposal runs counter to Dr. Manchin's explanation of the limitations placed on Board's and their plans.

I would also like your interpretation of the following statement that appears in the copy of their September 23, 2009 submission to the SBA: "the worst case scenario would be to build on the existing site."

I would also like to see a listing what each BOE was required to submit for consideration in the last funding round along with the SBA's rationale for funding/denying other competitive applications.

I am requesting this information on Monday, May 24, 2010 at 2:36 p.m..

May 28, 2010 Susan Eason and Katy Ryan compose a letter to Woodburn parents providing information about the upcoming meetings and request that the letter be distributed to Woodburn parents through the school. (See VII) They also write a letter inviting Woodburn staff to share their ideas for a new school and asked that this letter be distributed. On June 2, the Superintendent denied the letter to parents and approved the letter to staff. On June 3, the Superintendent sent out a memo to Woodburn parents with information about the upcoming meetings. It did not include the street address for the upcoming Board meeting.

June 1, 2010 Ryan emailed Walker to find out if the audience would be able to ask questions of the architect at the June 8 meeting. Walker responded, "that is not usually how it goes but we realize there will be some public questions arising."



June 8, 2010

Over fifty community members attend the Board meeting. At least seven people make public comments in favor of a rebuilt Woodburn school and against the Mileground, including Mark Brazaitis, Karen Woodfork, Joe Scotti, Eason, Ryan, Christini, and a Suncrest resident; one Easton parent speaks in favor of the Mileground site. Haddox presents a proposal for a 450-student new green school on the existing Woodburn site. Mike Kelly asks questions of his detailed proposal.

Ted Shriver presents nineteen sites that the Board had considered—several of these are in flood plains or not acquirable. After a few audience members ask questions of Shriver during the presentation, Walker announces that there will be no more questions because of time constraints. Shriver is invited to comment on the Woodburn community's proposal, but Haddox is not invited to speak to his concerns about the Mileground site. It is, for many, a frustrating meeting. Woodburn representatives receive over 15 emails from separate attendees expressing outrage at the proceedings. Ryan speaks at length with Easton parent after the meeting. Plenty of common ground—concerns about school size, length of travel to school, best educational practices.

June 10, 2010

Mike Kelly speaks on WAJR Jim and Kay show. He says there is not enough room for growth at the Woodburn site. Haddox indicated that reasonable growth could be planned at the Woodburn site over time, and since the projected student growth for the next decade in Mon Cty is very low, that would be sufficient—especially since a priority of the Woodburn Initiative is a relatively small school. Kelly indicated that the only thing that would make him change his vote about the Mileground was someone coming forward with a lot of free and flat land. The Board's decision appears to have been made prior to the public closure hearings.

June 14, 2010

Haddox writes to the WV Dept of Education the following and receives the below response:

**From:** Chris Haddox [mailto:chrishaddox@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 14, 2010 3:55 PM  
**To:** dvermill@access.k12.wv.us  
**Cc:** Virginia Harris; Katy Ryan; Barbara Fleishauer  
**Subject:** information request third try

Ms. Vermilion,

On 5/24/10 and again on 6/2/10 I tried to contact Dr. Paine through the e-mail listed on the WV Department of Education website. I assumed the e-mail was for his administrative assistant. Both requests yielded no response. Today I checked with Ms. Harris at the WV Department of Education and she confirmed this e-mail is indeed the appropriate contact for Dr. Paine. Could you please provide an explanation of why my inquiries have gone unanswered?

Thank you for your assistance.

Chris Haddox

**From:** Darcel Vermillion  
**To:** 'Chris Haddox'



**Sent:** Monday, June 14, 2010 4:14 PM  
**Subject:** RE: information request third try

Mr. Haddox,

Your email of May 24, 2010 (2:39 p.m.) was shared with Dr. Paine on the day it was received. However, Dr. Paine has been in meetings with Governor Manchin and the legislative working committee for several weeks in addition to his obligations to attend several other board and commission meetings. Email was not available to him during these meetings and he has worked diligently to catch up on incoming correspondence.

Your follow-up email of June 2, 2010 (9:42 p.m.) was again shared with Dr. Paine and was forwarded per his direction to Ms. Heather Deskins, General Counsel for the WV Department of Education on June 4. Your email below will also be forwarded to Ms. Deskins. I am certain you will hear from her as time permits. If you would like to contact her directly, you may do so at [athdeskins@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:athdeskins@access.k12.wv.us) or by phone at (304) 558-3667.

Ms. Darcel Vermillion  
*Assistant to the State Superintendent of Schools*  
E-mail: [dvermill@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:dvermill@access.k12.wv.us)

June 15, 2010                      Haddox files a complaint with the WV Board of Architecture against Ted Shriver

Prepared by Chris Haddox, Susan Eason, and Katy Ryan  
May 5 2010

Revised May10, 2010

Revised June 15, 2010



# VII. PETITION

## **WOODBURN ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORS PETITION TO THE MON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Woodburn Association of Neighbors is seeking signatures to this petition regarding the Monongalia County Board of Education's proposed Consolidated Educational Facilities Plan (CEFP). Your signature below indicates your agreement with our concerns. This petition will be submitted to the Mon County Board of Education as part of the public commentary on the proposed CEFP plan. Thank you for your support.

### **WE ARE FOR:**

1. A new or significantly renovated school building on the existing Woodburn site.
2. A new building for students in the largely disconnected Easton catchment area. This could be the soon-to-be vacant Cheat Lake Middle School.
3. Long-term neighborhood stabilization that comes with strong neighborhood schools and the benefits it provides school-age children and their families
4. Fairness, openness and public inclusivity from the earliest stages when the Board of Education plans for facilities.
5. Maintaining the current Suncrest Primary School as a K-3 school.

### **WE ARE AGAINST:**

1. Consolidating Woodburn and Easton schools
2. A new school on the Mileground
3. The closure and removal of neighborhood schools in favor of fringed-based schools that promote sprawl and disconnect students from communities.

\*\*\*As of June 15, 247 residents of Mon County have signed this petition. Supporters reside in the Morgantown areas of Suncrest, South Park, Jerome Park, Woodburn, Cheat Lake, among other neighborhoods, and in the western end of the county. The signatures will be submitted to the Mon County BOE on June 18.



# VIII. Complaint Filed with West Virginia Board of Architecture

## VIII. A. Complaint filed by Chris Haddox

6/12/10

Mr. Jeffrey Kreps, President  
WV Board of Architecture  
5th Avenue, Suite 220  
PO Box 9125  
Huntington, WV 25704-0125

RE: Complaint against Mr. Ted Shriver

Dear Mr. Kreps,

I am writing to file a complaint against Mr. Ted Shriver concerning his involvement with the Monongalia County Board of Education (BOE). Mr. Shriver has been hired by the Mon BOE to assist in the development of a new school utilizing recently awarded School Building Authority (SBA) funding from the State of West Virginia. This project would result in the closing of two schools, Woodburn and Easton Elementary Schools, and the subsequent development of a new consolidated school. Mr. Shriver has consistently withheld information, disseminated misinformation, and dodged questions from the public to elevate the Mon BOE's preferred site for the new school (the Mileground) and downplay the usable, existing site of Woodburn Elementary. The following is a detailed accounting of Mr. Shriver's lack of ethical behavior in this matter.

**March 11, 2010:** In response to a request from the Mon BOE, Mr. Shriver designed a site review matrix to be completed by members from the community. The review was supposedly designed to gather useful information about three potential building sites. Fourteen individuals were chosen to complete the review, six from each school involved in the closure/consolidation project, plus two "neutral" citizens. The review matrix was e-mailed on Thursday, March 11, with instructions to return the completed review by 4:00 the following day, Friday, March 12, 2010.

Upon opening the matrix, I could see that we had been given an invalid measure. Laypersons from the community were asked to rank three sites on seventeen different criteria. The following made this a demonstrably flawed request:

- The survey failed to divulge the location of the site that we now refer to as the Mileground site.
- There was a complete lack of hard data about any of the sites. My specific request for geo-technical analysis of the sites went unanswered by Mr. Shriver.



- The BOE had, at this point in time, a report on the Mileground site from TRIAD Engineering dated March 3, 2010 that closed by summarizing that "the site in question has a very high potential for subsidence." Surely, Mr. Shriver was aware of this report, or should have been, and failed to make it available to those completing the site review. Any results generated by this frivolous exercise were completely subjective and undoubtedly non-repeatable with a different set of respondents. This exercise was a waste of taxpayer money and clearly designed to build a case for the BOE's preferred site and against all other sites.

**SUMMARY OF CHARGE:** Frivolous expenditure of taxpayer monies; deliberately rigging a survey instrument; failure to provide requested information that was in hand.

**March 23, 2010:** At a BOE meeting on March 23, 2010, with public in attendance, Mr. Shriver presented his "findings" from the site review. As expected, the BOE's preferred site was the clear winner. When questioned about the source of the numbers he presented, Mr. Shriver did not clarify his process. I questioned the Board about the process by which a school board can request a waiver to WVDE Policy 6200 site size guidelines. Mr. Shriver stated that he did not believe any school project in WV had been granted a waiver. This is untrue. At a meeting in April, SBA director Mark Manchin said that he could think of three schools that had received waivers "off the top of his head."

**SUMMARY OF CHARGE:** Deliberately withholding information related to the evaluation of the sites in question; negligently providing misinformation about site size waivers.

**June 8, 2010:** At a BOE meeting on June 8, 2010, with at least fifty community members in attendance, Mr. Shriver made a presentation that drew understandable laughter from the audience. Mr. Shriver revisited his summary of the aforementioned site review analysis, only this time withholding additional information from his spreadsheet, choosing only to show totals and to reassert his claim that the Mileground site was the clear winner according to a community panel of respondents. When asked by the public about the data missing from his table, he replied that he did have that, but he deliberately chose to not present it so as to not confuse anyone. Upon continued requests to share the information, he failed to do so.

In response to an alternative, three-story Woodburn school proposal that had been designed and presented by community members, Mr. Shriver said that he "thought" that National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) would not allow a three-story school. He went on to say that he could not point to any ruling by the WV State Fire Marshall, but he recounted some experience he had where he had to redesign due to level of exist discharge issues. There is nothing in the NFPA 2009 that will prevent a three-story school so long as construction type requirements are met. A discussion with the WV State Fire Marshall confirmed this.

To make the argument that the Mileground site outranked the Woodburn site in the Community Connectivity/Development Density and the Alternative Transportation credit areas of the Sustainable Sites category of the LEED for Schools rating system, Mr. Shriver stated that the Woodburn neighborhood did not any bus lines. There are two different bus lines, which stop within 100 feet of the school site.



Mr. Shriver attempted to paint a picture of the Mileground site as being located in a more walkable area than the Woodburn location, even in the absence of sidewalks along the most congested stretch of road in Morgantown. He attempted to appease the chuckling crowd by saying he had asked the WV Division of Highways to please put sidewalks on the proposed school side, so that there would be a walking route to the variety of services along the Mileground. In his summary of services within a half-mile of the site, Mr. Shriver failed to include the Hot Spots and strip bar, yet he made sure to point out the “taverns” (local restaurants) that are within 1/2 mile of the Woodburn site. Mr. Shriver attempted to show that the Woodburn site was only within walking distance of a few taverns and a church. A study of goods/service located within 1/2 mile of the Woodburn site AND with walking routes to them, indicates that the site easily complies with this LEED credit. There are at least ten such services.

Mr. Shriver again failed to apprise his client, which by default is the public, of needed information by not mentioning that waivers can be sought to address acreage guidelines. The BOE's own successfully funded proposal to the SBA includes the option of rebuilding on the existing Woodburn site, so clearly Mr. Shriver knew that a waiver was possible.

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES:** Failure to exercise due diligence in his study of the LEED potential for each site; failure to mention how the Woodburn site could potentially earn points under the Materials and Resources category for C&D waste diversion, reuse of materials and local materials; deliberately making false and misleading statements about both the BOE's preferred site and the existing Woodburn site; failure to exercise due diligence.

I look forward to discussing this matter with you and to clarify, if necessary, any of the instances described above. While Mr. Shriver may be a competent architect, he has displayed a consistent lack of professionalism and ability in this particular situation. For 6-7% of a \$15,000,000 project, Mr. Shriver should be bringing far more to the table.

Sincerely,  
Chris Haddox



## **VIII. B. MISINFORMATION ON LEED CRITERIA AT JUNE 8 BOE MEETING**

Sent 9/11/2010 from Susan Eason to the BOE

Dear Friends-

I know that I am beating a dead horse, but architect Ted Shriver's LEED presentation to the BOE and the public left me angry. Ted Shriver either knowingly or due to lack of effort presented inaccurate/false/misleading information about how the LEED rating system and its associated points could play out on the various sites.

The LEED rating system can be worked a variety of ways and Ted did not accurately present the potential of the Woodburn site to earn as many, *if not more*, points under the Site Selection category than the Mileground site. The BOE and the public should know that the site being chosen does not have the same potential to earn the highest LEED Site Selection Credit's as the Woodburn site.

Let me focus for a minute on the specific Site Selection criteria that Ted focused on last night: Development Density and Community Connectivity. Under this criteria a project can earn points by following 1 of 2 options as outlined below (see full LEED for Schools Document at <http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=7248>):

OPTION 1: This option calls for developing on a previously developed site AND in a community with a minimum density of 60,000 sqft per acre (which is based on a development density of a typical 2 story downtown development and this must include the area of the project being built).

OR

OPTION 2: This option calls for developing OR renovating a building on a site that meets ALL of the following criteria:

- Is located on a previously developed site
- Is within 1/2 mile of a residential area with avg density of 10 units/acre
- Is within 1/2 mile of at least 10 basic services
- Had pedestrian access between the building and the services

Please note that both options call for developing on a PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED site. Woodburn definitely meets that. It is not so clear if the Mileground site would meet that criteria. A determination would be made by the Green Building Certification Institute, the entity that ultimately reviews and approves/disapproves all LEED projects.

As for goods and services and the pedestrian access between the project and the services, Woodburn has that already. The Mileground MIGHT have that at some future date, but this would require sidewalks to be built along the school side of the Mileground and operational within 1 year of school occupancy.



Within a half mile radius of Woodburn, Shriver failed to note that there are at least 10 services that you can walk to. They are: Wes Banco, two churches, two Dairy Mart convenience stores, a nail shop, the Dominion Post, Marilla Park pool and tennis courts, Townhill Laundry Mat, The Handbag Boutique, Town Hill Bar and Grill, Richwood Grill, Mario's Fishbowl, Whitmore Park, Division of Motor Vehicles, Superior Photo, Brockway Hair Salon, Brockway Mini Mart, Suds Car Wash, 3 Piano studios and the Marilla Community Center. **This LEED credit criteria could potentially earn 4 points.**

So...on this credit Ted was misleading at best.

Another Sustainable Site credit Ted focused on was the one dealing with availability of Public Transportation. This credit gives 4 options for meeting the criteria. The only one of the 4 options that would potentially work for either the Woodburn or Mileground sites is Option 2: Bus Stop Proximity. This option states:

Locate project within 1/4 mile walking distance of 1 or more stops for 2 or more buslines. You can count the school bus stop as one of these lines.

Last night people paused and gasped when Shriver said that Woodburn did not earn any points in the Public Transportation credit because there are no buses that run within a 1/4 mile of the site. People gasped because they knew that was wrong (a lie). There are two different buslines that stop at Richwood and Charles, 100 feet from the school--The Blue and Tyrone Rd. Mountain Public Bus Transportation. Additionally you can count the school buses. **This credit earns the Woodburn site 6 additional points.**

**Friends, that is 10 additional LEED points that Ted Shriver failed to acknowledge for the Woodburn site!!!**

In calculations with my husband Chris, who is a LEED AP like Ted Shriver, the Woodburn site could potentially earn at least 21 points (out of 24 for Site Selection points), putting it ahead of the 17 points (I believe) he recorded for the Mileground. Shriver is earning 6% of the \$15 million dollar project, part of that is to show how his client's site preference would potentially earn the most LEED Site Selection points over others. What Shriver failed to do is show how the Woodburn site could earn just as many and probably more than the Mileground site.

I am outraged that he has falsely presented this information, skewing the results to make it appear that the Mileground site objectively is the superior site. It is not. According to LEED Site Selection criteria, the current Woodburn site has the potential to earn *more* credit points than the Mileground.

You should know that Ted Shriver has either not done the job he was hired to do with our tax dollars or has lied to the public. Either is a total disgrace. Do not be doped. It is outrageous what was presented last night. It was wrong!



# IX. Statutes for Possible Legal Action

RELEVANT STATUTES INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

## WEST VIRGINIA CODE

### CHAPTER 6, ARTICLE 9A "SUNSHINE LAW"

#### ARTICLE 9A. OPEN GOVERNMENTAL PROCEEDINGS.

##### § 6-9A-1. DECLARATION OF LEGISLATIVE POLICY.

The Legislature hereby finds and declares that public agencies in this state exist for the singular purpose of representing citizens of this state in governmental affairs, and it is, therefore, in the best interests of the people of this state for the proceedings of public agencies to be conducted openly, with only a few clearly defined exceptions. The Legislature hereby further finds and declares that the citizens of this state do not yield their sovereignty to the governmental agencies that serve them. The people in delegating authority do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for them to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments of government created by them.

Open government allows the public to educate itself about government decisionmaking through individuals' attendance and participation at government functions, distribution of government information by the press or interested citizens, and public debate on issues deliberated within the government.

Public access to information promotes attendance at meetings, improves planning of meetings, and encourages more thorough preparation and complete discussion of issues by participating officials. The government also benefits from openness because better preparation and public input allow government agencies to gauge public preferences accurately and thereby tailor their actions and policies more closely to public needs....

#### CHAPTER 6B. PUBLIC OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES; ETHICS; CONFLICTS OF INTEREST; FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE.

##### ARTICLE 1. SHORT TITLE; LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS, PURPOSES AND INTENT; CONSTRUCTION AND APPLICATION OF CHAPTER; SEVERABILITY.

###### §6B-1-1. Short title.

This chapter shall be known as the "West Virginia Governmental Ethics Act."

###### §6B-1-2. Legislative findings, purpose, declaration and intent.

(a) The Legislature hereby finds that the holding of a public office or public employment is a public trust. Independence and impartiality of public officials and public employees are essential for the maintenance of the confidence of our citizens in the operation of a democratic government. The decisions and actions of public officials and public employees must be made free from undue influence, favoritism or threat, at every level of government. Public officials and public employees who exercise the powers of their office or employment for



personal gain beyond the lawful emoluments of their position or who seek to benefit narrow economic or political interests at the expense of the public at large undermine public confidence in the integrity of a democratic government.

**§18-1-4. Vision 2020: An Education Blueprint for Two Thousand Twenty.**

(a) This section, together with section one-a, article one, chapter eighteen-b of this code and article one-d of said chapter, shall be known as and may be cited as Vision 2020: An Education Blueprint for Two Thousand Twenty.

(4) The public education system will maintain and promote the health and safety of all students and will develop and promote responsibility, citizenship and strong character in all students...

**CONSTITUTION OF WEST VIRGINIA**

**2-2. POWERS OF GOVERNMENT IN CITIZENS.**

The powers of government reside in all the citizens of the state, and can be rightfully exercised only in accordance with their will and appointment.

**4-6. PROVISIONS FOR REMOVAL OF OFFICIALS.**

All officers elected or appointed under this constitution, may, unless in cases herein otherwise provided for, be removed from office for official misconduct, incompetence, neglect of duty, or gross immorality, in such manner as may be prescribed by general laws, and unless so removed they shall continue to discharge the duties of their respective offices until their successors are elected, or appointed and qualified.

**12-1. Education.**

The Legislature shall provide, by general law, for a thorough and efficient system of free schools.

**12-3. County superintendents.**

The Legislature may provide for county superintendents and such other officers as may be necessary to carry out the objects of this article and define their duties, powers and compensation.

**12-9. Certain acts prohibited.**

No person connected with the free school system of the state, or with any educational institution of any name or grade under state control, shall be interested in the sale, proceeds or profits of any book or other thing used, or to be used therein, under such penalties as may be prescribed by law: Provided, That nothing herein shall be construed to apply to any work written, or thing invented, by such person.

**MONONGALIA COUNTY FILE: 2- 03 SCHOOL BOARD POWERS AND DUTIES**

5. Estimate and seek to provide funds for the operation, support, maintenance, improvement and extension of the school system;

**MONONGALIA COUNTY FILE: 2- 08 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER CODE OF ETHICS**



**I.** 4. That my fellow board members and I must take the initiative in helping all the people of this county to have all the facts all the time about their schools, to the end that they will readily provide the finest possible school program, school staff, and school facilities.

**II.** 5. To resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as a school board member to benefit either myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the school district.

8. To welcome and encourage active cooperation by citizens, organizations, and the media of communication in the county with respect to establishing policy or current school operation and proposed future developments.

## **MONONGALIA COUNTY FILE 3- 01 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **PURPOSE**

The Board, Superintendent, and other members of the administrative team have the primary responsibility of designing an organization, which can accomplish the educational mission of the district in an effective, efficient, and economical manner.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

The Superintendent and the board have the overall administrative responsibility for the entire district.... Working cooperatively at the direction of the Superintendent and the Board, the administrators in Monongalia County are responsible for the long-range planning, resource determination, program implementation, and total evaluation necessary to provide the patrons of the public schools the best possible education at the lowest possible cost.

## **MONONGALIA COUNTY FILE: 4- 01 FISCAL MANAGEMENT GOALS**

### **PURPOSE/RESPONSIBILITY**

With respect to the school system's fiscal management, the Board seeks to achieve the following goals:

1. To engage in thorough advance planning, with broad-based staff and Board involvement, in order to develop budgets and direct expenditures in order to achieve maximum contributions to the educational program in relation to dollars expended.

2. To establish levels of funding which will provide high quality education for all students.



