

?Board elects new officers at North Harrison

Written by Administrator

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? ?With the recent elections of May 6, 2008 having brought two new faces to the ranks of the North Harrison board of School Trustees, the board wasted no time Tuesday (July 8) in electing new officers for the 2008-09 school year.

Robert Chinn was elected president, and Gary Byrne was elected as vice president. Byrne has been on the board since July, 2006. Elected as secretary was Fred Naegele. Members are the two newly elected members of the board: Michael Beyerle and Jerry Renneker.

James L. Shireman Company updated the board and Supt. Dr. Phil Partenheimer on the progress of the North Harrison Elementary School project. The building is over 80 percent complete on the upper level, and the reconstruction of the classrooms in the original building is nearly complete.

North Harrison Classroom Teacher's Association (NHCTA) president Greg Rupp spoke to the board, Dr. Partenheimer, and the public about the remonstrance petition recently circulated in the North Harrison community against the proposed \$15 million Morgan Elementary addition. Rupp thinks that it would be better to do something with the North Harrison Middle School at the same time as that of Morgan Elementary School.

"They should be done simultaneously," Rupp said of the Morgan Elementary School and any possible renovation of North Harrison Middle School. "The middle school has the same if not greater needs as Morgan. Safety should be an issue there since the office is in the middle of the building. The Morgan building project is hurriedly being rushed through the agenda to escape the new law that went into effect July 1. That law requires the public to vote on any new building project over \$10, 000. It is an effort to empty all the fund accounts of any funds that might be available to a mediator to use to settle a 4 year stalemate on a master contract."

Dr. Partenheimer stated during the meeting that it is possible to renovate Morgan Elementary School before the high school debt is paid off, due to two main factors.

First, with construction costs rising at 9 percent per year, if construction starts now instead of later, the savings will be considerable as opposed to starting the project two years down the road, as initially planned.

Second, the Capital Projects Fund (CPF) will be lowered to account for the bonds being issued for Morgan Elementary School and the resulting payments from taxpayer money. State law allows holding CPF monies and allowing them to accumulate, and this will be done over a three year period, allowing for future projects in the corporation.

"We will have a cushion in the Capital Projects Fund," said Dr. Partenheimer. He explained he will simply be cutting the CPF to neutralize the effect on the debt.

By putting the \$4 million in the Rainy Day Fund down on the Morgan Elementary School project, and by building now to avoid anticipated increases in the cost of construction, that \$11.7 million would be saved on the project in interest, construction costs, and other costs.

Dr. Partenheimer has stated in the past that the Morgan Elementary School project is partly necessary from a standpoint of equity with North Harrison Elementary School. Safety at Morgan Elementary School was another main concern for Dr. Partenheimer.

Dr. Partenheimer listed the safety reasons as: 1-Greater safety for car riders and bus riders (who have to board their rides home from the same area-the project would place the bus boarding area in back of the school); 2-Take care of overcrowding and the future need for portables; 3-Better safety in school layout, without possible building code violations; 4-Better safety for the public, students, and staff, since the new office would require all patrons entering the building to enter through the office area first; 5-A bigger lunchroom, allowing more students time to eat, as opposed to standing in line for it. Dr. Partenheimer thinks that the project has a

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better chance of passing if the \$4 million in Rainy Day Fund money is used, because the Property Tax Control Board has been turning down several other projects around the state, due to costs. If approved by the Property Tax Control Board, the project would then have to be approved by the Dept. of Local Finance.

Rupp said that the main reason North Harrison Elementary School was renovated was because of "environmental reasons."

"The truth be known, North Harrison Elementary School was not being favored to get a remodel job. To rework a building that nice and modern looking for \$15 million would be criminal. It was remodeled...because of environmental reasons. Several teachers and students were sick in the building and healthy once they moved to a different building. North Harrison Elementary School was remodeled to avoid lawsuits."

Board members Jerry Renneker, Bob Chinn, and Michael Beyerle all signed a Conflict of Interest statement as per Indiana Code. Also signing it were Assistant Supt. Dr. Ken Oppel, North Harrison High School principal Kelly Simpson, and North Harrison High School assistant principal Doug Dodge.

In other business, the board:

- Accepted the resignation (retirement) of Danny Ayres as a teacher at North Harrison Middle School effective June 30, 2009.
- Accepted the resignation (retirement) of Jo Thrasher as a teacher at North Harrison Middle School effective June 30, 2009.
- Appointed Laura Shireman as a physical education/health teacher effective with the 2008-09 school year.
- Appointed Jamie Polk as student council sponsor at North Harrison High School effective with the 2008-09 school year.
- Appointed Bob Plummer as the bus driver for the Pre-School route effective with the 2008-09 school year.
- Appointed Ashley Brown as the assistant ofr the bus driven by Bob Plummer.
- Approved textbook and rental fees for the 2008-09 school year.