

Scranton, Pennsylvania February 7, 2012

A Public Hearing of the Scranton Board of School Directors was held on Tuesday, February 7, 2012 in the auditorium of Scranton High School, 63 Mike Munchak Way, Scranton, PA 18508 at 7:00 PM prevailing time.

President Lesh called the hearing to order at 7:00PM with a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ROLL CALL: By the Secretary

PRESENT: Directors Barrett, Fox, Jeffers, O’Shea, Ruane, Sheridan, Shrive and Lesh.

ABSENT: Director McGuigan.

President Lesh now stated the purpose of the hearing is to hear public comment regarding the possible closure of Audubon Elementary School and the possible realignment of schools that may result.

President Lesh also read the rules and guidelines of the evening’s discussion.

At this time, Mr. William King asked Mr. Bill Byron of the Palumbo Group to present the options for Audubon Elementary School.

- 1) Repair – limited scope to achieve whatever the requirements are to reopen the school - Estimated \$3,714,000.00
- 2) Renovation – more comprehensive scope to comply with building codes and design standards – Estimated \$7,980,000.00
- 3) Demolition and replace, design and build on existing site - \$11,923,000.00
- 4) Permanent Closure – Redistrict students to neighboring schools at Adams, Prescott and McNichols Plaza and upgrades to those schools.

Adams Elementary School	Estimated \$2,000,000.00
Prescott Elementary School	Estimated \$2,150,000.00
McNichols Plaza School	Estimated <u>\$1,507,000.00</u>
	\$ 5,657,000.00

Mr. King questioned that the upgrades are wants, not needs. Mr. Byron responded that they are not requirements.

- 5) New school to combine Audubon and Prescott – Estimated \$17,225,000.00 in construction costs - Not including soft costs.

Mr. King noted that at a recent meeting it was discussed with the possible closing and redistricting Adams, Prescott and Whittier would result in \$850,000 in savings if that were to happen.

President Lesh now asked for public comment.

Ozzie Quinn, 116 Masters St., Scranton, expressed dissatisfaction with the 5 minute time limit and that the hearing was not advertised that the public would have a time limit.

President Lesh said he would allow him the time he needs.

Mr. Quinn now spoke of the teacher’s contract, their health insurance and asked the board to please hold their decision until the contract is settled and to take the taxpayer’s into consideration when making their decision regarding the closing of Audubon.

Mr. Quinn now asked if there was an RFP put out for Palumbo to do the work.

Mr. Gregg Sunday addressed and said that it was advertised and a number of proposals were received.

Mr. Quinn now spoke of the Nay Aug Gorge and suggested that it be used as part of science projects and that there is a lot of history that the children can learn about.

Marie Schumacher, 1799 E. Mountain Rd., Scranton, objected to not having sufficient time to prepare for the public hearing.

Mr. King indicated that the hearing was advertised 15 days prior in accordance with the Public School Code.

Ms. Schumacher now suggested making cuts and asked the board to consider the least expensive option regarding Audubon because the taxpayers cannot afford anything more.

David Dobson, 609 Crown Ave., Scranton, spoke of the working class wages, property taxes, tenants who do not pay taxes and KOZs.

Mr. Dobson also indicated that he sympathizes with the board trying to pay bills and asked to please do repairs and save every dime you have.

Mr. Dobson expressed his concern of redistricting and the safety of the children.

Mr. Dobson also spoke of his disapproval of Charter and Catholic Schools.

Mr. Dobson now asked the board again to please try to fix Audubon at the least expense to everyone.

Jalique Gillyard, 205 Colfax Ave., Scranton, a 4th grade student at Audubon asked the board to please keep Audubon open.

Jim Gilhooley, questioned what the class sizes would be if realignment occurs.

Mr. King addressed with a breakdown of the following:

There are presently four autistic classes with a total of 32 students. Two classes, (K-2nd grade) would be housed at Kennedy Elementary School and the other two classes (3rd-5th grade) would move to Isaac Tripp Elementary.

Preschool will be moved to McNichols Plaza.

52 students will move to Adams.

48 students will move to Whittier.

45 students will move to Prescott.

Mr. Lou Paris also added:

Whittier will add another 1st Grade and the class sizes would be:

1st grade class sizes – 22, 22, 23, 23

2nd Grade – 25, 26, 26

3rd Grade – 24, 24, 23

4th Grade – 23, 23, 24

5th Grade – 28, 29

Mr. Paris also added that there are still boundary exceptions to consider.

Adams Elementary will add another 5th Grade and the class sizes would be:

1st Grade – 20, 21

2nd Grade – 23, 23

3rd Grade - 26

4th Grade – 20, 21

5th Grade – 22, 22

Prescott Elementary is much more difficult as there is no more room for additional class space. First grade would have sixteen students added and nine students lost to Adams with the redistricting. Second grade would be one student over and also third grade, one student over. Fourth grade would be fine with the addition of six students with two classes of eight and eight. Fifth grade would add eleven students for a total of twenty-four students for two classrooms.

Mr. Paris again added that the boundary exceptions still have to be looked at and these are estimated numbers.

Mr. King also said that Prescott is the greatest challenge with no additional classrooms available, although Whittier and Adams do have extra classrooms. The redistricting is not set in stone, and there are still more adjustments to be made.

Mr. Gilhooley now spoke about the \$9,000,000.00 in reserve left over from the Isaac Tripp Elementary construction and asked where that money would be used.

Mr. King responded that there are a number of identified capital improvement projects that need to occur throughout the district.

Mr. Gilhooley now inquired about the air quality testing at Prescott Elementary School.

Mr. King said air quality testing was performed and it is his understanding that it was fine.

Mr. Gilhooley expressed his support for the building of a replacement school and said it is fiscally irresponsible to be pouring money into a hundred year old building.

Mr. Gilhooley spoke about grants available for eco-friendly construction and suggested contacting Senator Casey who lives in the area about available grants and he could possibly point us in the right direction.

Mr. Gilhooley said he thinks the board is doing a great job in moving forward with new construction and hopefully our children will want to stay in the area.

Rosemary Boland, SFT, thanked the board for calling this meeting to discuss the fate of Audubon and, the SFT stands in opposition of closing Audubon School and against redistricting students. The students and the community deserve our respect.

Ms. Boland further stated that smaller neighborhood schools produce better test grades and higher graduation rates as is indicated in the handout she provided to the board. Ms. Boland said that by closing Audubon you are shutting down the lives of everyone in that community.

Ms. Boland now spoke of the taxpayer's responsibility to the children of this city and it is our duty to provide for them as our parents and grandparents provided for us. We are the adults and we owe them the best we can give them.

Ms. Boland now talked about large class sizes of thirty students and does not recommend it and it is not educationally sound.

Ms. Boland spoke about Adams School and the fantastic community. The faculty and staff know the families and the families know them. It is important to keep the communities together.

Ms. Boland talked about the building of a new school and the 700 students that are now housed in our newer schools and 700 students are too many and that our newer schools are not as friendly as our smaller schools.

Ms. Boland asked the board to consider the literature she provided to the board titled Small Schools, SES and Achievement, and to please consider the children. We must keep that Audubon community whole.

Marietta Duffy, Scranton resident and teacher at Audubon, spoke about the PTA meeting that was recently held at Prescott School that administrators and board members attended to discuss the effects of Audubon's closing and there was more credence given to Prescott families and staff with no regard to Audubon families and staff.

Mrs. Duffy begged the board and administration not to wait until the last minute to let the parents know about the boundary changes as well as notify the teachers, paras, nurses, maintenance and staff of the next course of action they should take regarding their positions.

Mrs. Duffy now asked President Lesh to please not end tonight's meeting with the expression that it's all about the children because he has never been present at Audubon School when they were placed in the basement of Adams School. Mrs. Duffy further stated that Mr. Lesh has never visited St. Mary's to witness the children going through two buildings in all kinds of weather and trying to function to the best of their abilities.

Mrs. Duffy continued to say that no decent consideration has been given to the parents and staff of Audubon from Governor Corbett down to President Lesh and his board members and it's not the children, it's about the mighty dollar.

At this time President Lesh responded to Mrs. Duffy's remarks and said that he has been to Audubon School many times before and during the transition and he said that years ago he stood alone to support Audubon and Adams Schools from being closed. He said if he didn't stand for those two schools we'd really have a problem today. President Lesh further stated that these are not easy decisions and we have ninety days to think about this and make a decision and nothing is in stone. President Lesh said it is part of the process and nobody is trying to put the cart before the horse or pull the wool over anybody's eyes.

President Lesh said that yes, he will end this meeting tonight by saying it's all about the children because it is and he hasn't been here for fifteen years for nothing and resents Mrs. Duffy's remarks.

Peter Cupple, MD, thanked the board for having this meeting and he represents the Architectural Heritage Society. Mr. Cupple expresses his interest as a taxpayer and also a preservationist.

Dr. Cupple spoke of the beauty of Audubon School and said there is no comparison to Audubon and buildings constructed in the last forty years. Dr. Cupple asked to please don't abandon Audubon but rather to restore it; recycle it. It is an architectural gem.

Dr. Cupple spoke of the old Central High School and said it is a gorgeous building and Lackawanna College made it a first class college.

Dr. Cupple said the Architectural Heritage Society is pleading with the board to not abandon the building and he also echoed Ms. Boland's remarks that Audubon is the center of the that community and smaller schools are the way to go. Dr. Cupple feels strongly that the building could be cleaned up and restored at less cost than the other alternatives.

Dr. Cupple ended by saying that as a taxpayer; things are so tough right now for everybody and asked the board to please choose the least expensive alternative.

President Lesh now thanked the speakers and the meeting adjourned at 8:05PM.

By: _____
Secretary