

Special Meeting
Capital Forum
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
October 24, 2013

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held in the Columbia High School Library, 17 Parker Avenue, Maplewood, New Jersey, on October 24, 2013.

Board President Mrs. Daugherty called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Adequate written notice of this meeting of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education was sent to the Township and Village Clerks, the Libraries, The Star Ledger, the News Record and all schools.

ROLL CALL: Present: Mr. Bennett, Mrs. Daugherty, Mr. Eastman (arrived at 7:50 pm), Dr. Gaudelli, Mr. Giles, Ms. Karriem, Ms. Kritzberg, Ms. Pai, Mrs. Wren-Hardin

Absent: Ms. Crawford

8 BOARD MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Columbia High School Capital Plan - Mrs. Schneider

Ms. Aaron, Columbia High School assistant principal, welcomed everyone.

Mrs. Daugherty introduced tonight's topic and laid out the structure for the evening.

Mrs. Schneider presented a powerpoint presentation on the Capital Plan that included considerations for a Columbia High School Renewal Plan with the following highlights:

- Long Range Capital Plan
 - Facilities Assessment
 - Bonding cycles
 - Debt Service Impact
 - ROD Grants and Debt Service Aid
- Columbia High School Renewal
 - Enrollment Increases
 - Science Labs
 - Swimming Instruction
- Options Under Consideration - pool or no pool
- Funding, Debt Service and Tax impact
- Timelines and Community Feedback

[presentation is on file in Board Secretary's office]

Sue Ryan Goodman, resident, presented a powerpoint including an analysis of potential revenues if a new swimming pool was built at Columbia High School including the following highlights:

- Statistics on Swimming Ability
- Lessons at Nearby Pools - locations and cost
- Revenue Projections - group lessons during school year
- Suggested Pool Schedule
- Expense Projections
- Indoor Pools - surrounding area
- USA Swimming Clubs - surrounding area
- Summer Swimming - community pool swim teams

[presentation is on file in Board Secretary's office]

Municipal Representatives

Municipal representatives present were invited to comment. Mr. Schnall from South Orange commented that South Orange Village Township was looking into a new recreational center that may include a swimming pool and indicated that residents have expressed a desire for such a facility. Sheena Cullum from South Orange questioned how it was determined that swimming was a life skill. Mrs. Leventhal from Maplewood questioned the estimated tax impact for the average household. Mayor DeLuca from Maplewood commented on the need to consider the carrying capacity of our taxpayers but also need to weigh the educational value of our programs. It is up to the Board of Education to make a decision and then come to the Board of School Estimate.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

The following people spoke in favor of a Columbia High School renewal plan that includes the pool:

Lindsay Scott Maplewood	Asked to see plans for the pool.
Ed Cerny Maplewood	Benefit to having an indoor pool is that it can be used all year round, and is critical for communities to have for life skills, health benefits, etc.
David Cutler Captain Boys Swim Team	As a lifeguard, taught the Freshman class and found that the 30% non-swimmer statistic is true. Swim Team participation would drop without a pool in the building.
Jane Alexander South Orange	Is in favor of keeping the pool for the educational and life-skill aspect.
Vanessa Mayers District Parent	In favor of a pool and multipurpose fitness Her son is one of the top swimmers in the state and would have to look elsewhere for a school if Columbia doesn't meet his needs.

Gregg Theroff	As a competitive swimmer, felt that Columbia did not have an adequate swimming facility and looked elsewhere. Team practices are costly when held out of school and a pool could attract recreational swim programs.
Claudia Minde South Orange	Swam on the CHS team and feels that it is imperative that the district keep the pool and program.
Roy Greenman CHS Alumni Hall of Fame Committee	Columbia has a great athletic program and is in favor of keeping the pool and swim team going since Columbia was the first to have an indoor pool in the 1920's and the team built a dynasty in the 1960's.
Marian Cutler South Orange	Indicated that we cannot afford a pool with a potential \$17 million shortfall in four years. This should not be a Board of Education decision but something for the towns to consider. It's unfortunate the pool was ever built.
Sabina Hack	Suggests funds would be better spent on academic needs. Feels the high school pool is unnecessary and doesn't solve the drowning problem as younger children should be taught to swim in community pools. Suggested using the pool at Seton Hall.
Michael Healy South Orange	Feels the pool renovation is worthwhile and hopes everyone supports it.
Theresa Burns	In strong support of continuing the swim program and in bringing the high school facility up to date with the outstanding swimmers coming up to the high school from younger grades, but stressed the need for proper funding.
Maggie Singler Varsity Swim Team Coach	In favor of keeping the pool. As manager of Maplewood pool works with all ages to learn how to swim. Used to work at Morristown School District and saw astronomical revenues from the pool.
Walter Fields South Orange	Does not feel that swimming is a life skill. In favor of taking a strategic look at the Full athletic facilities and considering improvements in a pool that services multiple sports and students.
Barbara Cokarinos Maplewood	Thinks swimming is important for the schools and community. She supports it and hopes others do too.

Jason Hackett Maplewood	There is a huge surge of good swimmers coming to Columbia. Moved to town because of the high School. Is in favor of Option 4.
Craig Rexford Seth Boyden Parent	Swimming helped his daughter and feels the Board did a lot of research. Is in favor of Option 4.
Risa Olinsky Maplewood	Applauds the Board for fixing something from 1928. As a fitness instructor working with local women, they could be using the facilities if the pool was built.
Andrea Marino Maplewood	Suggests that students can take swimming lessons in the summer at the municipal pools. The Board should evaluate the needs of all teams. What about an indoor track? Give gym Exemption for varsity athletes.

Board discussion:

Ms. Karriem - The people here tonight are overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the pool. I agree that it is an important life skill. You may disagree if the school should be teaching swimming or not. Would like to explore funding resources further and perhaps think about having a fundraiser as was done for Underhill Sports Complex.

Mr. Eastman - Much can be done with \$8 million, and I suggest private funding to supplement the project in the current economic state.

Ms. Pai - The question of whether or not to have the pool is very complicated. The question is can we afford a pool, and can we afford it right now? There are students who have academic needs and we have to weigh that need against others. I would suggest searching for outside partners and funding. We are about to have a \$17 million deficit and there may be people living in the community who can't afford a tax increase.

Mr. Giles - Tentatively support Option 4 because I feel it is important for children to learn to swim and because the pool and swim team are a good draw for the school and town. I think the project is a good investment, however, consideration must be given to the budget gap.

Mr. Bennett - Growing enrollment necessitates hiring more staff and investing in technology. Operating and capital expenses are separate, but to the taxpayer, it is the same. There are other items that we are planning for, such as a preschool at Montrose School.

Dr. Gaudelli - I understand concerns about expenses and they are real concerns, but I feel the renovation project will ultimately better the community by making the community more attractive and expanding property values.

Mrs. Wren-Hardin - I am leaning towards building, but not convinced. I understand the difference between bonding and operating but cannot separate capital from educational operating. I don't want to sacrifice

a program to stay within 2%. Educational experience draws people to the community.

Mrs. Daugherty - It's a difficult decision due to the deficit we will be facing. If we build a pool and can raise more revenues than operating costs, the revenues can help offset the cost. The pool sets Columbia apart from other schools and it would be a shame to lose it. The renovation to the Underhill Sports Complex changed attitudes of students.

The Board of Education will be considering the options at the regular meeting on November 18, 2005.

MOTION made by Dr. Gaudelli, seconded by Mrs. Wren-Hardin, to adjourn. Motion unanimously approved at 9:40 p.m.

Cheryl Schneider
Board Secretary