

Commentary

A Newsletter for the Residents of the Westlake City School District

Facilities issue going to ballot

The Westlake Board of Education voted at its Jan. 25 meeting to accept a scaled-back recommendation to address the school district's structurally poor and overcrowded school buildings. The Board passed the second of two resolutions (the first was passed Jan. 11) to place an \$84 million bond issue on the May ballot.

The vote came after 26 months of research and feedback that included reports from architectural firms, the Ohio School Facilities Commission, three community groups and community surveys in which experts agreed there is a significant problem.

The facilities are in dire need of maintenance, repair, renovation and updating to ensure a 21st century education to the children of Westlake. Data collected found:

- The buildings need \$66 million just to bring them up to state minimum code
- In a 2008 study, 93% of building systems were rated unacceptable
- Handicap and special needs access is inadequate
- Schools are over capacity and there are teaching trailers at some schools
- Special needs children are taught

in converted bathrooms, hallways and storage areas

- Roofs leak, HVAC systems are inefficient and some classrooms allow the elements inside
- It is estimated that an additional \$3 million annually is needed just to patch the emergency needs -- money that will take away from educational programming

These conditions affect educational excellence. Problems and costs will only compound if we temporarily patch or do nothing.

The volunteer 20/20 Vision Committee studied the issue in a data-driven process. The community, experts and the district agree that it is time to fix the problems now.

The Board agreed with the recommendation of the 20/20 Committee and the result is an \$84 million bond issue on the May 4 ballot. The issue seeks to renovate and add onto Lee Burneson Middle School and convert it into a 5-6 intermediate school; build a new 7-8 middle school near the existing site; and complete major renovations to Westlake High School, while continuing to utilize the 2005 additions.

This is the first step in the recommended two-phased facilities plan.

There are several compelling reasons the Board voted to act now:

- Doing nothing means higher costs in the future as unaddressed problems mount
- Doing the renovations now allows the district to get more for its money by taking advantage of reduced construction prices and low interest rates
- When all improvements are made the district will save money in lower operating costs, energy efficiencies and a reduced staff
- The plan provides handicap accessibility, appropriate educational areas for special needs, and the environment and capacity for a 21st century education
- Eliminates need for trailers
- The time to responsibly fix the problem is now.
- Phasing demonstrates responsible use of funds while addressing the most pressing facilities issues first

You can find the minutes from the 20/20 Vision Committee meetings, along with supporting data, on our web site at www.wlake.org/facilities.

Board of Education meeting dates 2010

The Westlake Board of Education established its 2010 meeting schedule at its Jan. 4 organizational meeting. The Board will meet on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Westlake Schools Administration Building, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., unless otherwise announced. Meeting dates are as follows:

Jan. 25 regular meeting
Feb. 9 work session
Feb. 22 regular meeting
March 8 work session
March 22 regular meeting
April 12 work session
April 26 regular meeting
May 10 work session
May 24 regular meeting
June 28 regular meeting
July 12 work session
Aug. 23 regular meeting
Sept. 13 work session
Sept. 27 regular meeting
Oct. 11 work session
Oct. 25 regular meeting
Nov. 22 regular meeting
Dec. 13 regular meeting

To keep up to date on meetings visit the Web site at www.westlake.k12.oh.us/AdminBldg/BOE/BOESched.htm

Westlake Schools' Vision Statement

The Westlake City School District will provide a dynamic, student-centered, 21st Century learning environment. Our district will be characterized by high achievement, actively engaged learners, mutual respect, shared knowledge, pursuit of new skills and capabilities, collaborative learning, willingness to take action, a team commitment to data-riven continuous improvement, and tangible results.

Board installs leadership

The Westlake Board of Education appointed new leadership and welcomed a new member at its Jan. 4 organizational meeting.

Carol Winter was appointed President and Timothy Sullivan will return to the role of Vice President. Nate Cross, who won a four-year Board seat in the November election, and Andrea Rocco, who returns to the Board after winning another four-year

term, took the oath of office.

The Board also reaffirmed the school district's Mission statements -- *WE EDUCATE FOR EXCELLENCE ... Empowering all students to achieve their educational goals, to direct their lives, and to contribute to society.*

They also reaffirmed the Vision Statement, which you can find below left.

Westlake earns 2nd straight Perfect Audit from state

Auditor of State Mary Taylor's office has given the Westlake City School District a clean report for the 2008-09 school year. This is the second consecutive "perfect audit," clean of findings or citations, and paves the way for the district to receive the Auditor of State award.

CFO/Treasurer Mark C. Pepera credits the achievement to a concerted effort by his staff to implement and maintain a high level of policies on internal control and financial reporting procedures. Under Pepera's fiscal watch, the Westlake City School District has been recognized for 10 consecutive years of excellence in reporting.

Bob Wilhelm, chief auditor for the Cleveland region, points to Westlake's proactive development of sound policies. For example, Pepera has implemented multiple layers of oversight to prevent any individual from having uncontrolled power over the use of credit cards in the district.

Pepera suggests taking a proactive approach to updating and reviewing policies to avoid potential problems. You can read more about Westlake on the Auditor's web site at http://www.auditor.state.oh.us/enews/bp/2009/winter09_spotlight.htm

Middle school student earns top state math score

Kartik Dhinakaran, a seventh grader at Lee Burneson Middle School, was the top scorer in Ohio on the 2009 American Mathematics Contest 8. His score of 23 out of a possible 25 places him in the top 1% of test takers internationally.

The AMC 8 is a 25-question, 40-minute multiple-choice examination in middle school mathematics sponsored by the University of Nebraska and is designed to promote the development and enhancement of problem solving skills. About 2,400

schools and 178,000 students participate in the AMC 8. The average top score is 19.62. At LBMS, 271 students took the exam.

Kartik's score earned him an Award of Distinction. This is the second year in a row LBMS has a top state scorer. Last year Elizabeth Kobe scored a 24 on the exam.

Other top scorers who also earned Awards of Distinction were Krish Shah (22), Aswin Bikkani (21), Calvin Pozderac (21), Nicholas Craven



Kartik Dhinakaran

(20), Melissa Karpusz (20) and Aya Kawamura (20).

LBMS team captures top LEGO robotics research award

A team of 20 Lee Burneson Middle School students took the top Quality Research Award of a LEGO robotics regional competition. The Westlake Math Demons robotics team competed in the 2009 FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) LEGO League (FLL) competition. This is the second straight year they earned the top research award, this year for their research into biodiesel fuels. The team also was recognized with a pin for "gracious professionalism" for their handling of adversity with persistence and tenacity.



LBMS Math Demons are (l to r) Thome Reusser, Apsara Ravichandran, Paavani Reddy, Eleni Packis, Kartik Dhinakaran, Chris Tsuei, Pranav Idnany, Peter Slater and Robbie Slater. Phil Cooper (not picture) helped with technical assistance.

Parkside Intermediate School also sponsored and coached an FLL team that received the top award for "Innovative Solutions." The team's research tried to solve the problem

of students failing to wear bicycle helmets. The Parkside team was sponsored by Laura Lathem, a parent and owner of Z-space Technologies.

FLL is a multidisciplinary program that combines engineering, computer programming, problem solving, researching, presenting and teamwork into an eight-week period. Teams of three to 10 students, ages 9 to 14, work to build

and program a robot to complete nine tasks on a competition table in a 2.5-minute robot round. Teams also are judged on robot design, programming and problem-solving strategies; the research project, solution and outreach; and teamwork judges, who evaluate how well the group functioned as a team.



Parkside team members (front row, l to r) C.J. Null, Chris Slater. (2nd row, l to r) Nate Hofford, Jack Wadden, Alex Lathem, Jeremy McCabe, Jason Albrecht, Adam Dixon. (back row) Conor Miller, Zach Wise

Westlake expands on-line capabilities for parents

Our on-line payment system is here! We are happy to announce that we are providing parents an on-line system to pay for your child(ren) lunch account(s). You may use your Visa, Master Card, Discover, American Express credit and/or debit card for this transaction. We are unable to take credit card payments at our buildings; this option is only available over the Internet. Our buildings and food service cashiers will still accept cash and checks.

Parents who use the on-line system must first create an account. You will need your child's ID number as part of the on-line registration. If you don't know your child's ID number, please contact your building secretary. No personal information about your student is available online. The district does not keep your credit card information on file and you will need to re-enter your credit card number each time you use the on-line system.

You can access the new on-line payment system by going to our district web site -- www.wlake.org -- then click on the SPS EZpay logo to be transferred over to the payment site. Complete the registration page, and add your child's name(s) and ID number(s). Once you have registered and created a password you will not need the student ID number again. You can check your child's account balances as long as you have access to the Internet. You will receive a Low Lunch balance via e-mail. Please be sure to allow SPS EZpay into your e-mail otherwise it will be considered spam and will go into your junk e-mail.

Questions may be directed to your child's school, or 1-866-MyEZpay (866-693-9729), or e-mail info@spsezpay.com. Payments made online will be credited by the end of the next business day. There is a \$1.50 per transaction convenience charge to use this system. We hope this will make payments easier and more convenient.



The Westlake City School District is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action agency and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, political affiliation or disability.

Westlake City Schools

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The Westlake City School District is a member of the Westlake Chamber of Commerce.

Please forward comments to Kim Bonvissuto, communications coordinator, 27200 Hilliard Blvd., or call (440) 250-1258. Or email bonvissuto@wlake.org

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