

Building Exterior, Fund Equity Are Concerns at School

** Continued from page 1*
 fund equity (18 votes); the school's curriculum (12 votes); mentoring (12 votes); teamwork (12 votes); preparing students for advancement (11 votes); civility within the school (11 votes); reviewing staff needs (6 votes); teachers treating students fairly (6 votes); increasing extracurricular activities (6 votes); improving student sentiment toward the school (5 votes); improving student respect for teachers (5 votes); improving the arts curriculum (5 votes).

"This is an attempt to stop just paying the bills and waiting for something to happen," Trustee Jason St. Onge explained about the list of priorities. "Instead of being reactive, we want to be proactive.

"Before this, we didn't have a broad vision," he added. "Now we have a path to follow."

Thrown into the mix Monday night were the thoughts of teachers, residents, and students, none of whom were present when the board deliberated its priorities in September.

Infrastructure

Cedar trees on the west end of the building have grown up against the walls and deteriorated the paint and brick mortar, said Dr. Schrock, who believes the building's soffits and facade are in bad shape.

"This is high-dollar stuff," he told the audience of teachers, parents, and some students. "This will probably cost tens of thousands of dollars."

He said he would like to see the carpeting in the library replaced, its tables refinished, more benches added to the playground, and a sign installed in front of the school, which is a project that has been planned for a few years.

Trustee Trish Martin said she would like to see some gardening done around the school building, once the exterior improvements are finished.

The library received a transformation last month as school assistant Julie Rilenge and a host of other volunteers redecorated it to make it more comfortable and enticing for students to use.

Mrs. Rilenge said she still has more work in the library, which now is used in the evenings for the school's Wednesday night movies and Tuesday night community games.

"It's really neat to see the kids' reaction when they come in the library," said Ms. Allen. "They seem to really like the improvements."

"I would like to create enough traffic in this library for us to legitimately hire a full-time librarian," said Dr. Schrock.

For now, part-time physical education teacher Mary Patay works a couple hours three days a week in the library.

Fund Equity and Curriculum

How much should the school dip into its savings, especially with plans to repair the exterior of the building?

The school's fund equity,



The library at Mackinac Island Public School has received a facelift by assistant Julie Rilenge and other Island volunteers. The library was repainted, given new furnishings, and decorated for a more comfortable setting for students such as (from left) Ariel Leeper, Karlena Mosley, and Riley Chaffee. (Photograph courtesy of Susan Bennett)

which has "about \$1 million and change," said Dr. Schrock, is supported by 18 mills of non-homestead property taxes. The school also receives about \$80,000 a year from the state's Saving Paradise fund, which gives small, isolated schools in the Upper Peninsula a small financial boost.

Some teachers and parents would like to see money spent on bringing in a qualified teacher for foreign language or music courses and improve on programs such as interactive television and preschool classes.

"It has been the same here as when we were kids," said Kris Clark, a parent, speaking about the lack of foreign language classes. "It would be nice if our next teacher was bilingual. I don't care if that person is certified or not, just as long as our kids are getting some exposure to it."

Some board members said they would like to see wood and metal shop and business classes added to the curriculum.

Board President Ben Mosley believes maintaining the school's infrastructure is more of a priority right now.

"If we don't use [the fund equity], this building is going to disintegrate," he said.

Dr. Schrock explained there is no standard formula for using fund equity money, however, said Mr. Mosley, "We want to keep it at a minimum of 60 percent" as a precaution. "We can go through that fund equity real quick if we wanted to, but it's in the school's best interest to be really careful how we spend it.

"It's tough, sometimes," he added, "because you have to decide, do we want to send our seniors on a Florida trip or do we fix the leaky roof?"

Dr. Schrock pointed out that 60 of 561 schools in Michigan are in a deficit and have had their fund equities wiped out.

"We are fortunate to have the fund equity that we do and we are fortunate to be able to save on expenses such as daily

transportation," he said.

Both the board and the audience agreed that forming a parent-teacher organization would be a good idea, as would be revitalizing the school improvement committee, consisting of teachers, parents, and students.

The issue of transportation to school during the fall and winter was also brought up. Mackinac Island Carriage Tours has provided rides to school for younger children at no charge. It also provides transportation for fourth-grader Olivia Chambers, who is

disabled.

Some audience members agreed that a busing system should be used at least for colder months, when it becomes a safety issue, especially for those children who live outside of the downtown area. Insurance for the horses, said Mr. Mosley, is too costly, according to the school's insurance carrier.

"There's too much of a variable with horses, is what our insurance agents told us," he said.

Trustee Sara Chambers suggested that parents speak to Carriage Tours to see if there is a way to provide transportation without going through the school's insurance.

Civility/ Teamwork/ Dress Code

One of Dr. Schrock's concerns is the lack of school pride and civility among students and teachers, stating that he would like to see students address teachers as "Mrs.," "Mister," or "Miss."

"There was a lot of hostility and rudeness at the beginning of the year," he said, "but the teachers have worked hard, and I don't see as many referrals as I used to."

A few members of the audience pointed out that students are wearing clothes which are

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