

Citizens Oversight Steering Committee

Mr. Bret Johnson
Chairman

To: Charleston County School District Board of Trustees

Ms. Mary Graham
Vice Chair

From: Bret Johnson, Chairman
Citizens Oversight Steering Committee

Date: November 10, 2011

Mr. Darbis Briggman

Re: Wando Middle College

Ms. Alison Dailey

The Citizens Oversight Steering Committee met Thursday, October 13, 2011. Mary Graham, a member and vice chair of the Steering Committee (representing the Chamber of Commerce) asked that the action taken by the Board of Trustees on Monday, October 10, 2011 regarding the Wando Middle College be placed on our meeting agenda. To say the least, it was of great concern to the Steering Committee to hear that a project appearing on the Referendum wasn't receiving the full support of the Board of Trustees.

Mr. Lonnie Hamilton

Mr. Mark Hartley

Ms. Amy Jowers

The Citizens Oversight Steering Committee was created by formal action of the Charleston County School District Board of Trustees. The creation of this committee was done expressly to ensure oversight of the significant revenues to be generated by a one penny sales tax to fund the 2011-2016 Building Program. The purpose (see attached charter) of this committee included the assurance that projects that were voted for and supported by virtue of the passage of the November 2010 Referendum are indeed completed as commitments made by the School District under that referendum. Thus, in staying true to the purpose of the committee and the oversight responsibility given by the Board of Trustees I, on behalf of the Committee, offering the following:

Mr. Kevin Shoemake

Mr. Glen Stiegman

Background:

It is my understanding that Trustee Moffly wants the Board to approve building a second high school at the Wando South Campus instead of building the Middle College project at the Wando North Campus as represented on the ballot. The news reported that three other members aligned with Trustee Moffly during the October 10th meeting by voting against approving a design contract related to the Middle College. The resulting 4-4 vote effectively delays further progress on the Middle College until the Board of Trustees meets again on November 14, 2011.

As support for her position, Ms. Moffly has cited the results of votes taken during certain Community Dialogs that preceded the ballot in which a second high school at the Wando South campus received the highest level of support.

Position of Steering Committee:

While the Committee is aware of the results of the votes taken during the Community Dialogs, we also understand that certain mitigating factors were present that led the Board to support the phased approach that resulted in the construction of the Middle College prior to a new high school. Of particular note was the fact that the Wando South Campus is slated to be used as a swing campus during construction of the new

Jennie Moore and Laing schools. Therefore, the timing of construction of a new high school on the Wando South Campus wasn't a good fit for the 2011-2016 Building Program and didn't alleviate the overcrowding on the Wando North Campus in a timely manner.

The Steering Committee supports the phased approach put forth by the Board of Trustees and included in the referendum and believes it is the most effective and efficient approach to addressing future high school capacity needs in Mount Pleasant. The taxpayers of Charleston County have already invested over \$600,000 in the design of the Wando Middle College Project. It would be a waste of taxpayer funds to stop development of the Middle College now. Moreover, it is the Committees' understanding that the Board of Trustees does not have the legal authority to substitute projects on the referendum. Therefore, a new high school on the Wando South Campus cannot be funded from proceeds of the one penny sales tax and the District does not have an alternative funding source for a new high school projected to cost approximately \$75 million, substantially more than the \$49.7 million cost of the Middle College. Failure to move forward on the Middle College doesn't create funding capacity for a new high school, it simply means that the solutions to overcrowding in Mount Pleasant that were addressed in the referendum won't be implemented.

Other Factors Concerning the Middle College:

In terms of the location of the Middle College, although the ballot was not site-specific, it has been clear in all presentations prior to and post the referendum, that the site for the Wando Middle College was intended to be property contiguous to the existing Wando High School. All of the advance design work to this point has been done in anticipation of using this location (See attached article).

The Citizens Oversight Steering Committee is also aware of concerns about traffic in and around the area of Wando High School. The Steering Committee understands that part of the current project plan is to include a new road to provide greater ingress and egress to the campus which would mitigate significantly, traffic concerns as the site continues to grow with respect to the Middle College and enrollment increases in general.

Conclusion:

The Steering Committee strongly urges the Board of Trustees to move without hesitation to approve the design contract to keep this project on schedule. The Citizens Oversight Steering Committee enters this for the record and clearly believes that the Committee is doing what the Board has authorized as the purpose of the work of our Committee. Furthermore, the Citizens Oversight Steering Committee feels it is imperative that if future referendums are to be successful, the wishes of the voters approving the November 2010 referendum must be implemented as they appear in the referendum.

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