

CARROLL COUNTY COMET

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Memberships include:



A defining moment in Carroll County history

Strike up the band and wave the flag!
Carroll County residents have been handed a golden opportunity to participate in a process which will direct the future of the county for many years to come.

What is this magical venture?
Why, it is the development of the Carroll County Comprehensive Land Use Plan!

County commissioners, in accordance with a recommendation from the Area Plan Commission, hired Ground Rules Inc. to guide county citizenry through the process of planning future growth and mapping out development. Areas to be developed commercially and areas to be left as residential will be decided when it is all said and done.

All community concerns should be voiced and discussed during this process. And who better to do that? As many as the ones who live here, who pay taxes here and who have an investment in the future of Carroll County.

County residents are urged to participate in any way possible. This is an important time for your voice to be heard. The first meeting hosted by Ground Rules was last Thursday.

Get involved! Tell your commissioners what you expect and how you feel. Contact any county leader to talk about what you want to see happen to this county.

Go to focus group meetings! Volunteer to work for the county on this defining moment in Carroll County history. Call the APC office and say you want to take part. Say you want to build your county and fully maximize its potential, and the potential of those who live here.

Remember that actions speak louder than words. The most you can expect to realize from this golden opportunity is that which you put into it.

Don't let this chance get past you. This is your county. This is your plan. This is your time.

Guest column: Realignment of DCSC Elementary Schools - another perspective

By Pete Wagoner

In announcing a special upcoming work session of the Delphi Community School Corporation Board of Trustees to discuss realignment of DCSC elementary schools, Superintendent Ralph Walker indicated the public could attend, but would not be allowed to speak.

Mr. Walker has extolled the benefits he claims would result from this realignment. However, there are many residents of Jackson, Liberty, Rock Creek and portions of Deer Creek townships, whose children/grandchildren attend (or attended) Camden Elementary, who hold a very different point of view.

Mr. Walker has outlined four elementary school options being considered, but it is quite clear the most favored option is to have all K-1 students attend "Camden Childhood Center," and 2-5 students attend "Hillcrest Intermediate Academy." An alternative might be to use Hillcrest for K-3 and Camden for 4-5. Under either plan, Camden ceases to operate as a K-5 elementary school. The unwieldy bussing involved would cause this alignment to be disliked by many parents throughout the corporation, and it will

be only a short-time before a "building project" can then be proposed/sold so all elementary students can come to Delphi and the Camden facility can be closed.

If Camden Elementary were only a "poor to average performing school" a reasonable case might be made to alter its use or close it down, but this clearly is not the situation. Camden Elementary has consistently performed well-above state norms, posted one of the highest set of ISTEP scores of any public elementary school in north-central Indiana in 2006, and earned "Four Star" awards in 2002 and 2003. Having a history of strong performance should help secure Camden's future as a K-5 school. This is why so many people, who support this school, are very frustrated and strongly oppose realignment.

To dismantle, or close, an excellent K-5 school should require a well-documented set of very good reasons. Mr. Walker provides a lengthy list of "reasons/benefits," but has offered very few details to support his claims. The board president (Bob Resler) cites Mr. Walker's past record with Lebanon School Corporation and indi-

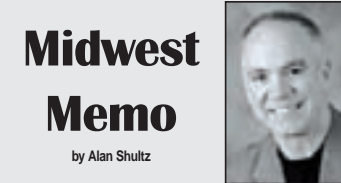
It's been a long time since I've been in a hospital emergency waiting room. Years ago a certain tuna fish sandwich and I disagreed over some secret ingredient. About 3 a.m. I woke up with Popeye the Sailor man's left hand attached to my body. On that hand was a wedding ring that had become more than snug.

On that visit to the emergency room my wait was maybe five minutes. My balloon hand caught the interest of the medical staff on duty. My hand, my wedding ring and I were a pleasant diversion from the gunshot wound in the bay to my left and the drug overdose on my right.

It turns out my stint as Popeye was back in the good old days of big city emergency rooms. I've read in papers and heard on television accounts of a crisis brewing in emergency rooms across the country. They're being shut down as too expensive to run. The ones left are being overtaxed. Uninsured folks use the emergency room as their primary care provider. Things have changed in the hospital emergency room as I witnessed first hand Monday evening.

My son is not a complainer. His SOS call to his mother seemed serious. We picked him up within 30 minutes of his phone call. Off we went.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital is an enormous medical complex in the Streeterville neighborhood of Chicago lying between Lake Shore Drive and Michigan Ave. This is Oprah's neighborhood, the high rent district. I figured the emer-



Waiting room

gency room would be the equivalent of the Ritz.

It's a maze of one-way streets over near Northwestern. Finding the emergency room was tough. But find it, we did, and I dropped mother and son at the door, then sought out a parking garage for the car.

When I finally got in the emergency room waiting room I assumed I was in the wrong place. It looked like the Department of Motor Vehicles on a really bad day. Every form of health complaint seemed represented in that packed waiting room. It seemed foolish to sit in such close proximity of one hundred or so sick people for a potentially endless wait.

I roused my group from their seats. We had to wait even to sign out to escape. The charge nurse understood our plan to head elsewhere.

"It's like this every night," she said as we made our exit.

Our parking bill was \$10 for 30 minutes.

Our sons were born at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, Ill. That was the emergency room that handled the bad tuna sandwich. The evening was warm, traffic was light, we headed down Lake Shore Drive to Evanston.

There's no charge nurse at St. Francis to greet you. There's

just a computer to check yourself in. There are some signs to point you the way to the waiting room. And there, at the end of the hall, a new group, assorted ailments by the dozens, chairs packed tightly together. We sat for an hour. During that time we encountered one employee of the hospital. She walked into the waiting room and called out a name. No response. The patient had left. There was no intake, no supervision, a bunch of sick strangers left to fend for themselves packed in a waiting room. One moaning lady wandered off into a restricted area rummaging about.

Seated next to me, a young pregnant mother talked and fiddled on her cell phone for the entire hour we waited. Her two infant children, one in her lap, one in a stroller alternately wailed, slept and cowered from their mother's wrath. The young mother slapped the children, kicked at the stroller and swore constantly at the children for the entire hour. She threatened, berated and manhandled these two little ones who long before had belonged in bed. Never once did the woman put her cell phone down, never once. Child abuse out in the open in a public hospital waiting room but no one of authority even to witness it.

We left after an hour. This time we didn't have to sign out. I reported the monster mother to the nurses smoking out back.

There was no wait at the McDonald's drive-thru. The patient got a Sprite and some chicken tenders. He slept soundly on the drive home.

Letters to the Editor

The Comet welcomes letters to the editor responding to articles and events in the news. They must include the author's name, address and telephone number. The letter writer's name and city/town will appear in the paper - no exceptions. Letters must be 400 words or less in length. Please send your letters to editor@carrollcountycomet.com; Letters to the Editor, Comet, PO Box 26, Flora, IN 46929 or P.O. Box 179, Delphi, IN 46923; or fax 574-967-3384 or 765-564-2010. By submitting a letter or opinion article, the author grants the Comet the right to publish, distribute, archive or use the work in print, electronic, on-line or other format.

Join the Community Club

It is again time for the annual membership drive for the Flora Community Club. I think there is a misconception that the Club is just for business owners. Every citizen and family is invited to join.

Special events in our community don't just happen. It takes volunteers and funds to provide these activities. The Community Club sponsors the Fish Fry and the business portion of the County Fair, the annual Christmas Parade, the scarecrows that decorate the downtown in the fall, signage at the edges of town welcoming visitors to our community, as well as a portion of the Fourth of July fireworks display.

If you enjoy any of these events, please consider becoming a member of the Flora Community Club. Family memberships are available. For more information or to volunteer, contact Sarah Hanaway at 574-967-3194.

The annual banquet is April 11. Make your reservations today.

Joretta L Tinsman
Flora

Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Smith

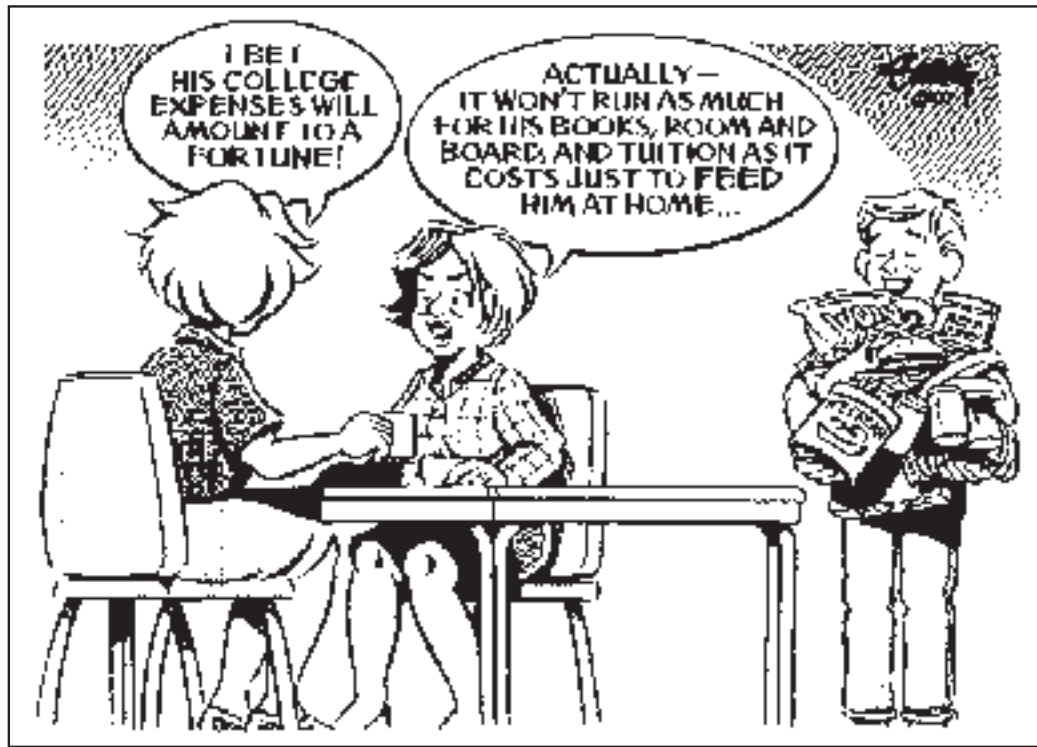
Superior Court judgments are gathered from public records on file in the Carroll County Clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, Delphi.

New Filings

Gloria L. Hammel was charged with operating while intoxicated - endangering, operating a motor vehicle with ACE of .15 or more and expired licenses.

Thomas Parker was charged with driving while suspended.

Joshua T. Johnson was charged with resisting law enforcement.



caters we should all accept whatever recommendations he has to offer. Let's take a look at the reasons Mr. Walker has cited to justify a total realignment of the Hillcrest and Camden elementary schools:

Provides equal educational opportunities for all elementary students

Mixing all students together from first-day of kindergarten, bussing them between two locations, and increasing most class sizes will tend to equalize opportunities, but which students will benefit from all the moving around required? Certainly not those now attending Camden, and it's hard to imagine how this would benefit students from the Hillcrest area. Realignment would eliminate any future comparisons of performance metrics between Hillcrest and Camden, but pursuing realignment for this purpose surely runs counter to the intent of having state performance standards. There might be legitimate rea-

Because the public has a right to know...

In an effort to help our readers understand what government meetings are happening when and where, the Comet will now print upcoming meetings on a weekly basis.

- Monday, April 2**
 √County drainage board: 8:30 a.m.
 √County Commissioners: 9 a.m.
 √Delphi Board of Works: 6:30 p.m.
 √Flora Town Council: 6 p.m.
 √Delphi City Council: 7 p.m.
Tuesday, April 3
 √Carroll School Board: 7:30 p.m.

Public Notices appearing in this issue of the Comet:

- Beck Estate.....5B
 Sheriff Sale-Hanaway.....5B
 Sheriff Sale-Ridgeway.....4B
 Sheriff Sale-Landis.....4B
 Sheriff Sale-Stover.....5B
 Sheriff Sale-Allen.....5B
 Sheriff Sale-Shives.....4B
 Flora Lib.-Cap. Proj.....5B
 Hwy Claims.....5B
 County Claims.....5B
 Sheriff Sale-Smith.....5B
 Camden Lib.-Cap. Proj.....5B

Questions concerning Indiana's Open Door and Public Access Laws may be directed to the state's public access office, at 1-800-228-6013.

sons for ISTEP scores being somewhat higher at Camden, demographic differences may have some impact. These scores could be analyzed to take such factors into consideration. However, eliminating ISTEP comparisons is not a sound justification for realigning to provide "equal educational opportunities".

Improves academic achievement for all students

Mr. Walker, please, explain to us exactly how realignment will do this. You intend to bus students crisscross the entire corporation, move them between Camden and Hillcrest, require many young children to spend an hour/day longer riding a bus; add more than a 100 students to Hillcrest building, dismiss 6 teachers, increase class sizes, and guarantee no child will spend his/her elementary school years at one school located in close-proximity to home. The state has no data clearly demonstrating any improvement in academic performance at school systems that have implemented this type of realignment. While Mr. Walker is credited with improving academic performance at Lebanon School Corporation, that system continues to operate four, traditional K-5 elementary schools. All this type of realignment can ensure is that students now attending Camden Elementary will be adversely impacted and students now attending Hillcrest would realize few, if any, significant benefits.

Equalizes class sizes

Realignment does offer an opportunity to better balance class sizes, and in some years might result in a slightly better utilization of teaching resources. However, there are other creative ways to balance teacher workloads on a year-to-year basis. Current class sizes at Camden are now comparable to those found at the very best elementary schools, nationwide, while most class sizes at Hillcrest are somewhat larger. Smaller class sizes allow more interaction with a well-qualified teacher and is the best way to improve a child's learning opportunity.

If DCSC is really serious about academic improvement, Mr. Walker should find a way to make class sizes at Hillcrest comparable to those at Camden. This would mean not eliminat-

ing six elementary teacher positions and utilizing unused classrooms at Hillcrest by dividing students there into smaller classes. This would be a far better way to "equalize class sizes," and improve academic opportunities for all children.

Improves financial outlook

A potential savings in teacher costs is the primary motivation that causes some corporations to consider this type realignment. However, additional transportation costs are an off-set and a negative effect on student performance is a real possibility. It is also quite likely that extensive remodeling would be required at Camden to convert the building from a K-5 layout to one that can accommodate only K-1 students (more hidden costs?). There are certainly better places to seek a \$250,000 savings (less than 3% of total budget). It is also clear the annual savings being touted are being considerably over-stated.

Can offer full-day kindergarten

Mr. Walker now states that full-day kindergarten could not be offered at Camden. I was told by the new Camden Principal, Carol Coon, on Jan. 31, that, "with some rearrangement full-day kindergarten could be offered at Camden." I feel confident there is a way to offer this program at the Camden facility.

Can have a Gifted and Talented program

DCSC had this program with the existing elementary configuration before it was discontinued due to funding limitations. It does not require realignment to re-instate such a program, it simply requires that priority be given to this purpose when allocating resources. Whether this type program warrants a top-priority for DCSC is a topic for another discussion.

Improves collaboration, provides consistent staff development and improves rapport between teachers

Now we're talking about intangibles and more educational jargon. Effective leadership could make sure all these improvements are made with the current elementary school configuration.

Mr. Walker and Mr. Resler have made comments about how realignment may help to improve relations between students and parents from the two

school communities. They continue to cite "a problem" that does not exist! There has never been any serious rivalry or unfriendliness between students or parents from Camden and Delphi since DCSC was created. However, there is no doubt the realignment being championed by Mr. Walker, and the manner in which this matter is being handled, is creating bad-feelings that have not been evident since the school consolidations of the 1960s. Camden Elementary has been an integral part of DCSC since the corporation was formed, and its name only relates to its location, not the territory it serves. Camden Elementary has always served families well beyond the Camden community. Students from Rock Creek and Liberty Townships have attended this school since its beginning, and in more recent years students were added from eastern portions of Deer Creek Township. Outstanding support from parents, and the community at-large, has always been a trademark of Camden Elementary, which contributes to making this school such a uniquely supportive place for children to learn. This elementary school has consistently demonstrated a high-level of academic performance, and there is no good reason to try and fix (dismantle or close) a very good school that is not broken!

Anyone who supports leaving Camden Elementary as is, has been labeled as being against change, not supportive of improving educational opportunities for all children, and somehow being tied to the past. That simply is not true! We support well-reasoned plans/changes within DCSC to address declining graduation rates, declining standardized test scores and a need to better manage finances. However, the board of trustees should reject the elementary school realignment plan put forward by Mr. Walker, and instead focus its attention on other ways to better utilize and prioritize corporation resources that will enhance academic opportunities for all children.

Pete Wagoner is president of the Camden Town Council.

Web poll

Tell us starting Wednesday at our web site, carrollcountycomet.com

Each week the Comet polls its readers on a different topic. Vote online at carrollcountycomet.com starting each Thursday, and then click the Comments link to send us an email voicing your opinion. The best responses will be printed the following week.

What is your idea of the ideal spring vacation?

- A week on the beach
- Take a cruise
- A trip to visit relatives
- Stay at home and do what you darn well please
- Get a head start on spring cleaning

Last Weeks results

Carroll County Commissioners are wondering if county residents are willing to pay the money it would take to make county roads safe and passable for an extended length of time. How would you like to provide your opinion about your willingness to pay?

- 16% At commissioners' meetings only.
 - 42% Through e-mail and telephone calls.
 - 5% By person to person visits.
 - 37% In one or more public meetings designed for that purpose only.
- Total responses: 19