



WHAT PRICE NOSTALGIA?

MORE LEVY DOLLARS SLATED FOR CENTRAL KITCHEN

Total expenditures are unknown for the Colonial Bread Building converted to the Central Kitchen for the DM Public Schools are, but reliable sources say more repairs are now necessary, these for recent cracks in the floor, also possibly more work on drainage.

Costs for this additional work on the building are unavailable, as are true costs for the building purchase and renovations to date. Estimates range from

\$21 to 40 million spent to date on this building. Staff, then Superintendent, then Board have, repeatedly ignored citizen requests for exact expenditures.

Prior to purchase by Duane Van Hemert for the DM Schools, the building had been cited as unsuitable for food preparation by the agent for the previous owner. When pressed, the seller's agent, in hearing testimony presented before DM Planning Dept. staff and a dozen or so interested citizens, stated that costs to bring the building to required safety standards had been carefully estimated and were deemed to be prohibitive; however that the owner was willing for the landmark sign to be removed to another location should a buyer not wish to maintain it in working condition.

Prior to sale of the building and shortly before purchase by the DM District, sentimental articles in the REGISTER dealt with the nostalgic memories of local residents for the large neon sign: Colonial is Good Bread. Still in place on the public-owned DMPS Central Kitchen, the sign is no longer lighted at night.

Whether sentimentality motivated the purchase is unclear. In an interview June 2005, Mr. Van Hemert took full responsibility for the purchase of the building when asked the question: Whose idea was buying the old Colonial Bread Building?

-- Concerned Taxpayer

I do not know about the costs or politics of the Central Kitchen, but I do know the food is no better and kids do not eat meals as healthy as they did before. Pizza and other starchy choices are snatched up and gobbled down. Nothing connects from top to bottom now. Even nutrition is not important.

-- Frustrated teacher

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.

-- Federick Douglass



SOS MISSION

To return high quality to our D.M. schools:

by adding opportunities for a higher percentage of students in order to prepare for productive lives;

by requiring adequate research and open discussion prior to all major decisions;

by correcting the following problems:

- lack of planning
- fiscal extravagance
- lack of oversight
- inadequate staffing
- missing curriculum.

Inside

- J. Patch on saving money
- S. Walsh on Pappajohn II
- Educator Comments
- 2003 Board Request
- Pending Legislation

DIFFERENT VIEWS: CENTRAL CAMPUS

PATCH ADDRESSES THE SCHOOL BOARD

January 24, 2006



Jim Patch

The Adams-Garton merger was moved up one year. We should slow down; not speed up!

The Governor and some legislators want public schools to have early childhood programs. When all-day kindergarten was proposed, we agreed we would do it, but said we didn't have the room. Now will we have the room for early childhood initiatives? Will

the merged schools be big enough for future programs or do we need to keep buildings not now filled to capacity in order to accommodate those future children?

We have 60 to 100 children at each age level in those neighborhoods. Also, smaller elementary school-size initiatives in the legislature are looming. Research shows students K-4 in classes of 13-17 are 11% more likely to graduate from high school than those in classes of 22-26. The benefits of smaller class size is even more dramatic for children from low-income families: they are twice as likely to graduate if they have small classes in the early grades.

LET'S SLOW DOWN! Wait for real site-planning. Wait to see what the legislature does.

In small towns, smaller schools also seem to be better. My hometown school merged with two other small towns in district 275, but it is still a small school district. The ASHTON GAZETTE reported that last semester 60% of high school students — and 60% of middle school students — were on the honor roll. We here in Des Moines struggle to get 75% even able to read at grade level.

The Downtown School is reported as having only from 12% to 20% of students from outside our district; therefore, if these statistics are correct, 80-88 % of these young students must come from neighborhood schools. I made the mistake of voting to fund the purchase of the Federal Home Loan Building because at the time I believed it would fill up without draining students from their own neighborhoods. I did not consider the impact on residential neighborhoods.

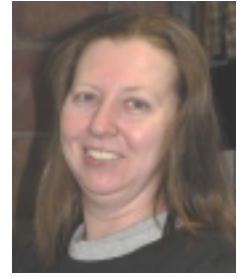
cont. on pg. 4 →

A Personal View: Central Campus

by Sharon Walsh

While I cannot comment specifically on HF 864, I can offer some insight on Central Campus as I am on the Central Campus site committee.

The committee meetings have always been open to the public, and usually listed in the D. M. Register. The next one is now scheduled for Tuesday, February 21.



Sharon Walsh

The committee spent time debating the administration's proposal to split the programs currently at Central into two (or more) different sites. Although I personally did not agree with that decision, the committee voted overwhelmingly to move forward with that plan. During all of our discussions, our overriding concern was to do what is best for the students.

Chief reasons given for moving out of the current building included the high cost to renovate the current building, the assertion that the building has more square-footage than is needed and, thus, is a drain on the district's utility bills, also, that income could be generated from selling the building. The proposed cost for two new buildings (including profit from sale of current site) was less than the proposed cost of renovation, partially because the district has been given the use of current Pappajohn space at what I consider a nominal rental fee. I agreed with these reasons.

Pappajohn II is on a "fast-track" because the Academy staff and students are currently split between the two buildings, something that is obviously difficult. The sooner all Academy classes are under one roof the better for everyone. Starting Pappajohn Phase II sooner will also make it easier for the committee (comprised of volunteers) to manage the construction of two new buildings.

I trust you know I am not one to follow blindly the lead of the administration, and while I have many complaints about HOW the administration does things, in the case of Central I can mostly agree with what is being planned.

COMMENTS TO DM SCHOOL BOARD
ON THE CENTRAL KITCHEN
JANUARY 21, 2003

I am Nan Stillians — 1604 24 th Place — and I am speaking on Item 8b. Supt. Witherspoon, Marc Ward, and Des Moines School Board Members, each and every one.

The issue here is the Central Food and Nutrition Center — the former Colonial Bread Building at 2nd Avenue and University — and kitchen equipment bids pertaining to it.



The District estimates the total costs for this project will be \$11,300,000 from Local Option Sales taxes and PPEL funds. The items before us tonight are bids for undefined kitchen equipment ranging from \$4.4 million to \$3,950,700.00 — or a fraction shy of \$4 million. The difference in cost for this equipment — whatever it is — between the high bid and low bid comes to approximately \$400,000 in savings (a mere trifle by your spending patterns).

I am here to call on you to declare a moratorium on this and all further fiscal commitments regarding this Central Kitchen until thorough, objective inspections and evaluations of this entire site can take place. This is not a request for such a moratorium, but insistence upon it — not only for the same of students, teachers, staff to be fed from there, for those workers in the site, but also for the future of each of you as responsible officials protecting the public trust.

Our reasoning is as follows:

1. The site has been stated as and believed to be contaminated beyond restoration to safety standards and beyond rational allocations of tax expenditures for making it an appropriate for the receipt, storage, or preparation of food.
2. The original purchase of the building was frivolous and irresponsible. Prior research was not applied in the decision. Previous school board members had researched kitchens and food warehousing in other cities, had seen appropriate models costing a tiny fraction of this building. The City was willing to co-

operate with other available, more suitable buildings at much less expense. However, you — Superintendent and you Board Members voting at the time — rushed to buy this old, poorly located, and contaminated building. Possibly, at the time, the gush of sentimental media coverage about saving the local landmark Colonial Is Good Bread sign played into your decision. Whatever your reasons, they lacked sufficient study.

3. Prior to your extravagant purchase of this old, unsuitable building, you did not put out a Request for Proposals. You had not fully defined your needs, had not studied nor outlined fully the functions to take place, nor completed cost analysis of this or other sites. By avoiding a RFP, you avoided the possibility of other interested developers or real estate brokers to present better, less-costly prospects.

For these and other reasons time does not allow, I call for you to table any further action whatever on the Central Kitchen until this building can be thoroughly examined by an objective team of construction experts and sanitation specialists accompanied by the interested public and media. Furthermore, these studies must be pursued without interference by any DMPS officials, or contractual consultants, or firms with ongoing projects, or vested interests of any kind in the Des Moines Public Schools.

The building is unsuitable for this purpose.

ADD (if time allows)

As an elected political officials, individually and collectively, you have lost, misplaced, or misused huge amounts of money — millions of dollars coming from and belonging to tax-payers. You have extravagantly squandered more millions in school building projects against the wishes of those involved — with your construction manager and administrators bullying site committees in the process. You have bought two, unnecessary, buildings, inappropriate for the uses you intend for them. Sow's ears do not convert to silk purses, whatever the amounts of money spent. Each of you is responsible for supervising the Superintendent. Each of you is answerable to the public.

Neighborhood schools are essential to good, stable neighborhoods and to residential property values.

We keep hearing that we must move quickly to build new schools and large additions to existing schools, but this does not make sense statistically. That we must hurry because construction materials will escalate even more because of the demand from Hurricane Katrina, but this is a guess and is not relevant to serving our children and community.

We need to study the relationship of the children to the schools. Why are some children being bused away from their neighborhoods. What are the real facts here? What was the logic of declaring certain schools “traditional” and rejecting children from nearby? How many separate ESL programs are there in how many schools? How many separate programs for exceptional children are there. The public needs to see the research that is supposed to justify these school closings.

If we sell the Walnut Street School (FHLB building), we can make some money from a site that never had a feasibility study as a school and may still be in violation of the law as a primary school, especially pre-school.

If we reverse the decision to demolish Edmunds, we can save half a million there. Then we can spend several tens of thousands solving our many and various physical plant problems. We can keep open all of the schools now slated for closure and still be money ahead.

In the commercial renovation of the old building just west of the new science center, they took out every wall, left nothing but floors and columns, added two floors, all for just under \$200 per square foot. There is not one-fourth that much work to provide a thorough renovation of Central Campus where all college-bound and technical courses can exist side by side, with room to spare for some of those various spaces the District is now paying rent for around town.

We need to do what any sensible person, business, or corporation does before spending money — get the hard facts, study our goals to see which are most essential in line with our mission, then go back to the drawing board. We failed to follow the rules and regulations, to get objective analyses, to insist on quality & competitive cost estimates, then competitive bids.

To date, in this case of our second-largest business in Polk County — and our most essential public entity, we have failed. Now, we need to rethink our mission, brainstorm in open sessions and present all of aspects of planning to the public prior to any more major decisions.

EDUCATOR COMMENTS:

DM DISTRICT DISCONTENT CONTINUES

Teachers, parents and community activists in the Des Moines district not only are discontented, they are also dismayed and disgusted. They feel betrayed by this administration, ignored by the majority of the school board members, and lied to by others in leadership roles. These are serious concerns that must be addressed.



Deb McMahon

Our district is called the Des Moines Independent Community School District. It's imperative we honor that name. Community means all of us together; not just a chosen few. When I vote in school board elections, I'm voting for people to represent me. I'm not choosing royalty for the king's court.

As a former civics teacher, I taught my students that each voice counts. I believe it is time to redirect our district and to remind the powers that be that this is a democracy; not a dictatorship.

Deb McMahon

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CURRENT LEGISLATIVE BILLS RE: EDUCATION

House File 2346 (re: Oversight precautions) An Act relating to public access to school district financial information, providing for establishment and distribution of a financial report by school districts & providing for posting of information relating to outstanding school district levies.

House File 864 (re: Pappajohn Center II) A bill for an act providing an exemption from and a refund of sales and use tax on materials and services used in the construction of a building or addition to a building to be used as a collaborative educational facility and including effective and applicability date provision. (Formerly HSB 296)