

BUY
PHOTO
REPRINTS
ONLINE

SUBSCRIBE TO
THE GAZETTE
ONLINE
OR IN PRINT

GAZETTENET.com

Daily Hampshire Gazette - Established 1786

Amherst Bulletin | The Recorder | Valley Advocate | Pioneer Valley | Many Hands | Hampshire Life

Sign out | Account | Trouble finding something? | Contact us | Classifieds

news search

Local News | State/Region | U.S./World | Obituaries | Sports | Business | Schools | Colleges | Politics | Opinion | Entertainment | Health | Living | Sci/Tech

School Notes: Comment sought on school reorganization

By **CATHERINE BAUM**
Staff Writer

Email this page | Printer-friendly version

Thursday, December 24, 2009

EASTHAMPTON

A committee studying the possible reorganization of the city's elementary schools has extended its deadline to make a recommendation to the School Committee by a year.

Composed of parents, teachers, elementary school principals and a School Committee member, the School Reorganization Committee changed its recommendation due date from this month to next December in part because committee members want to familiarize the new superintendent with the idea and also gather more input from the public. A search committee is looking for a new superintendent to succeed Superintendent Deborah Carter in July.

The School Reorganization Committee fields and considers questions regarding changes the possible reorganization of elementary schools would bring to bussing, dismissal and arrival times and whether proposed setups would be educationally sound. The committee, which has met five times since it started this fall, holds public meetings that begin with public speak time.

Chairman Tim Luce reports the committee is not on one side of the fence and is open to ideas. The next meeting is Jan. 19 at 6:30 p.m. at Maple Elementary School.

One reconfiguration the committee has grappled with is Maple Elementary School would house all students from pre-kindergarten through first grade and Center and Pepin elementary schools would house grades 2 through 4. Benefits would include the elimination of transferring students every year due to building size restraints and equitable access for students to the sizable gymnasium, auditorium and library that Maple Elementary currently doesn't have, Luce said, while negative reactions include the elimination of neighborhood schools and splitting up siblings.

In the coming months, the School Reorganization Committee will expand its outreach on the possible reorganization through parent surveys and public forums; solicit feedback from school districts where the possible model is in place, including Ludlow and South Hadley schools, and put a pricetag on the alternate setups. Center and Pepin schools Principal Robert Orlando said he is pleased with the new deadline as it allows more time to take on these tasks.

"It feels better and it allows us to explore as thoroughly as we need to," Orlando said. "It's a really important decision that's going to affect a lot of people."

Principals Luce and Orlando jointly decided to form a committee to consider the switch, a decision which generated from frustration to move students from building to building every year due to space limitations and budget constraints. For example, Maple Elementary School has three kindergarten



The Hidden Hills of Western Massachusetts
EXPLORE!!!
Hidden-Hills.com



Popular stories

- Discount supermarket eyes Hadley opening
- Longtime Thornes cafe may bow out
- Teddy Forance goes Hollywood: Local dancer to take the stage during the Academy Awards ceremonies
- Amherst superintendent fires back at critics regarding sick leave
- South Hadley parent sues, alleging harassment after secret recordings came to light

classes and two first grade classes, so every year Maple transfers about 18 kindergarten students to Center/Pepin. Luce reports this creates some hardship for families as Maple schoolchildren have to leave the building, students and school traditions they've known for a year. New this year, Center Elementary School first graders transferred to second grade in Pepin or Maple schools in order to fill the need created when a second-grade teacher was let go at Center Elementary due to budget woes.

In addition, Luce reports several Easthampton elementary students opted in-district School Choice to Center Elementary School because it is the only elementary school that met its Adequate Yearly Progress requirements as defined by the No Child Left Behind law - a factor that has left Center school with bigger class sizes.

The possible reorganization of schools is "an idea Mr. Luce and I felt was worth looking at given the current state of how we're organized," Orlando said. "We have no preconceived biases as to whether or not to support it."

Entering White Brook

Some students and parents are still having difficulty using the buzzer at the front entrance to White Brook Middle School, the school's newsletter reports. Push the buzzer once and then let go. It will ring in the main office, where one of the administrative assistants views visitors at the door through a monitor. The office staff can hear visitors and speak with them directly. There is no need to push the buzzer again.

Catherine Baum can be reached at cbaum@gazettenet.com.

Filed Under: [easthampton](#) [local](#) [news](#) [school notes](#) [the summit](#)

Comments

Post new comment

Your name:

[Catherine Baum](#)

Subject:

Comment: *

Input format

Filtered HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
 - Allowed HTML tags: <a> <i> <code> <cite> <div>
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

Full HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

unfiltered HTML

[More information about formatting options](#)



[Local News](#) | [State/Region](#) | [U.S./World](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Schools](#) | [Colleges](#) | [Politics](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health](#) | [Living](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) | [Blogs](#)

[Copyright Notice](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help Center](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Subscribe to the Gazette](#) | [Advertising](#)

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2008 All rights reserved