

16 May 2007

Mrs. Lynn Fairfield-Sonn
Chairman, Board of Education
Regional School District 18
4 Davis Road West
Old Lyme, CT 06371

Re: High School Building Committee

Dear Lynn:

Thank you and the rest of the Board of Education for hosting a good dialogue about the High School Building project. I believe about thirty voters expressed their points of view and there was a good give and take amongst those seated at the tables.

I am particularly pleased that the consensus was to take our time to work on a revised plan, rather than try to throw one together by June 30th. The extra time will enable us all to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various elements of the project and to build consensus for a new plan.

In my remarks, I alluded to a reconstituted Building Committee. I respectfully suggest the following be done:

- The Board of Ed members on the Committee must be made ex officio. This is the case with all the Town's committees and I believe this used to be the way the District did it in the past. Having Board members serve as voting members on a committee, and particularly in the position of chairman, is contrary to the separation and objectivity the committee should have. How can these Board members vote on the recommendations of the Committee in an impartial way? It is a basic conflict that should not exist.
- Without the Board members as members of the Committee, the membership will consist of six people. I believe it is important that four to six new members be added that are selected by the representatives who worked to defeat the \$54 million project. This is important in order to give them representation which, in turn, will lead to building consensus. If people from both sides of the issue analyze it together, there is a much better chance for unity and a successful outcome. On the other hand, if one side is excluded or underrepresented in a disproportionate way, I believe the feeling of unity will suffer and so will the chance of success.

Again, I thank the Board for hosting last evenings meeting. As community leaders and officials, we have a unique opportunity to get this project back on track. I think we heard from all the speakers that they want the High School fixed. The disagreement concerns the scope and therefore cost of the project. I shall speak with members of the groups that opposed the original project in order to develop a list of potential Building Committee members.

Sincerely,

Timothy C. Griswold
First Selectman

cc: Selectmen