

## **Posturing obscures vital**

### **issue in D99 land flap**

**I've read with more than passing interest the debate over the District 99 site in Woodridge, and I have to say, I disagree with just about everyone on this issue.**

I disagree with Woodridge Mayor Bill Murphy, who knows full well the first interest of any taxing body is to maximize its assets. He has ably steered Woodridge in that direction, and knows the inner workings of a school district. Bill was criticized in some quarters for the slick maneuvering needed to annex the Seven Bridges project in the late 1980s out from under the noses of the village of Lisle by finding a loophole in the boundary agreement. He did what he needed to do to maximize the village's opportunity to obtain that property. It was a one-shot deal, and the decision he helped shape then has paid great dividends today. Why is he then so critical of District 99 for attempting to maximize its asset now?

I disagree with Superintendent Dave Eblen and the leadership at District 99, because the above aside, they did have an agreement in principle with Woodridge to sell them the property at the time when the district was ready to sell. The district is correctly seeking to determine the highest price at which it can reasonably sell the property, but the best place to sell it -- for District 99, for the village of Woodridge, for the Woodridge Park District and for the citizens of Woodridge -- is to Woodridge. Principle is important.

I disagree with Bruce Beckman's assessment that there is lingering educational value to the Woodridge site for District 99. Bruce and I sat on the same committee that evaluated outdoor land usage in District 99, and he knows full well that educators within the district are adamantly opposed to using the Woodridge site for athletics or educational purposes because of the logistic issues involved, particularly transportation. District 99 sold the \$50 million site expansion plan to voters several years ago on the basis that it would solve the district's facility needs. To suggest, as Bruce did in a letter to the editor, that the North High School site might somehow become obsolete undermines that understanding with the taxpayers of the district and needlessly clouds the issue.

I disagree with Gary Tagtmeier -- but then, that's not hard. The next time Gary gets anywhere near a fact, he ought to introduce himself, because I'm not sure he's ever met one. If District 99 had sold the property to Woodridge at first blush, you would have read his letters critical of the administration because it didn't hold out for more money. His shrill act is getting tiresome. Gary's views ought to be rejected out of hand, just as Gary's candidacy was rejected by voters in April.

District 99 needs to sell the Woodridge site because it gives them the capital needed to complete the site acquisition necessary to secure the future of both campuses. There is a workable site plan for North High, and it requires land acquisition. In our current economic and tax climate, time is of the essence. As this debate has shown, land is not getting cheaper.

Woodridge's desire for the land has been well-known for years -- perhaps too well-known. Perhaps Woodridge assumed too much in expecting District 99 to simply hand them land they had used for free for years. Perhaps noses have gotten out of joint on both sides.

All of this posturing is obscuring the important issue right now: the intertwined needs of District 99, the village of Woodridge and the Woodridge Park District. Either the elected officials (Bill Murphy, Julia Beckman and Fred Hohnke) or the professional staff (John Perry, Dave Eblen and Keith Frankland) need to sit down in the long-standing spirit of intergovernmental cooperation they have shown for decades and get this done.

**Bob Vavra**

*Glen Ellyn*