

## **Dist. 99 land represents heart of Woodridge**

I just want to clarify two important points made at the District 99 School Board meeting held June 20, one by the School Board and one by the residents of Woodridge.

The School Board stressed how it has to make decisions for the good of all the district's residents, not just Woodridge residents. The people of Woodridge stressed how the use of this land would impact their daily lives.

It's a given that residents of Downers Grove, Lisle, Darien, etc., would want the School Board to make the best financial decision. Who wouldn't?

But I strongly feel that the human interest should trump the financial interest, for the following reasons.

Yes, if the School Board sold the land for top dollar, the money would benefit the whole school district, in whatever way they saw fit. This financial benefit is only a Band-Aid and is not a long-term benefit for the district. As some residents stated last night, they would agree to other, less-distressing ways to raise funds for the schools. The long-term repercussions on the village and people of Woodridge, however, would be devastating and lasting to our community.

The village of Woodridge is divided by 75th Street and this land truly is the heart of our wonderful, loving community. Downers Grove has a vibrant downtown area used over and over again for the benefit of their community. With District 99's generosity, we have benefited by the use of this undeveloped land in the same manner. It is the center of our neighborhoods. I personally do not care how this parcel of land was acquired. It does not matter in the scheme of things.

I listened to Woodridge Mayor William Murphy and other village employees, I saw their presentation and letters, I listened to the director of the Woodridge Park District, and I personally spoke to the attorney for the village of Woodridge. All were very upfront and forthcoming and answered my questions freely and in detail. I listened to District 99's presentation and saw nothing in writing, had no questions answered, and their attorney did not speak. The School Board was not forthcoming in any manner and this leads me to believe they were disingenuous in their presentation. Opinions are being formed not by the School Board's words but by their actions. I don't need to repeat the cliché.

The School Board saw the large turnout of our community, and knows that the people who appeared June 20 can reach tens of other people. We are very united and will strongly fight the sale of this land to any entity but the village of Woodridge and our Park District. If this issue is allowed to divide us further, the bad feelings will seep into any future referendums the School Board would propose. I know this to be true, because in my whole 47 years I have never been active in civic affairs, for any cause. This cause has touched my heart.

I hope the School Board will work with the village of Woodridge in good faith. The people of Woodridge want this and are watching closely. We are a very large part of District 99 and voted in the last referendum for monies to expand the high schools. I would vote in favor of other, less devastating ways to raise funds for the schools. It hits our pocketbooks either way. I would give money, not the heart of my community. Thank you.

**Jody A. Nelson**

*Woodridge*