

District 99 must talk to Woodridge officials

To the District 99 School Board:

Last night (June 20) I attended the District 99 School Board meeting. Mark Staehlin gave a presentation on the District 99 property in Woodridge. He explained that the School Board had agreed to follow a 1978 agreement to get an appraisal if they were to sell the land and give Woodridge the first chance to buy it. He gave two dates when the School Board did talk to the village of Woodridge.

But he stopped short of explaining that District 99 had already violated and undermined the 1978 agreement by hiring Newcastle Limited to give them the value of the land. Newcastle Limited is a marketer, not an appraiser. This will not be an appraisal. The District 99 Web site posted dates of June 3 to open bids and June 10 to select purchasers. Why do you say in a public meeting that you are getting an appraisal when your Web site clearly says that you are getting bids? If I were a developer and put together a proposal, only to find out that you were doing this to obtain information, I would feel that you are dishonest. Or, are you truly marketing it to sell it? I, as a resident who pays taxes to District 99, have lost my respect and confidence in you.

Why did you derail the process by hiring Newcastle? Woodridge condemned the property to let the courts decide the value of the land. I am sure that every resident of District 99, no matter what town they live in, would like to avoid unnecessary litigation and the expenses that go with it. I know that the village of Woodridge officials would like to talk to you and not to go to court. Please talk to the village of Woodridge and cut short unnecessary expenses! Be honest with us.

Each slide presented started with "your rights," to get information and take time to think about things. Actually, it IS your obligation to assess everything to be good stewards of District 99.

Your tone, however, leaves me feeling that you are not assessing things as MY representative but as a separate and aloof body that has no relationship to me. Maybe more folks need to come to more board meetings regularly so that you feel like representatives, and not so alone.

On the other hand, in Woodridge, the village officials would have come to the people first to get ideas before they took action. We have regular town meetings to assess our needs and goals, and plan future action. We are so happy with our officials who ask us first. Then, they actually represent us.

If you have an obligation to make sure about the value and use of the property in Woodridge, I believe that you also have an obligation to see what the land will become if you no longer own it. We have all seen the result of folks who sold their land for profit and left a mess behind. Can you be good stewards and teach by example to the kids in District 99, ensuring that a community should not have the heart of their town torn to pieces, and that open space, trees, wildlife, and what is now a community park could have the chance to remain a community park?

This good outcome, while benefiting the youth in District 99 with a fair price without litigation, could also benefit the community which it is the center of. Please just talk to Woodridge. Don't go to court! Teach ethics by your actions!

I have seen the reaction of some high school students, and the only thing they have learned so far is to be mercenary. Now let's work on stewardship and fairness, which I think are higher values.

Joni Mimnaugh

Woodridge