

Two exceptions taken
to District 99 article

This is in response to June 24 Reporter article titled "Residents of Woodridge voice concerns to Dist. 99."

We have two issues with the article that was published last week summarizing the June 20 District 99 School Board meeting. The first issue is the headline.

Yes, many residents of Woodridge voiced their concerns at the meeting with the approach District 99 has been taking regarding the potential disposition of the open space in the center of Woodridge. The article, however, is almost entirely dedicated to Mark Staehlin and District 99's spin on this issue. Many of the residents (and there were many) who attended this meeting and spoke out on this issue were denied the benefit of any real dialogue because the District 99 School Board was advised by their attorneys not to respond due to pending litigation. Your article, despite its title, did not give a voice to those concerns and ideas expressed at the meeting by the residents who attended.

The second issue is that Laura Saran and myself feel we were quoted in the above article published in your newspaper out of context. Since we disagree with the context in which our quotes were used, we feel compelled to provide the complete version of our discussion after the meeting with other residents and your reporter in the intended context:

We have both participated in open discussions with Woodridge village officials who have been very responsive and forthright with information and to the questions and concerns of residents. They have been able to do this even with the pending litigation.

District 99's presentation contained information that appeared to contradict their own past actions as well as information provided by the village of Woodridge. Staehlin's version was quite different from the Woodridge perspective. Because two-way communications were not allowed, it was not possible to reconcile those contradictions with the District 99 School Board during the meeting.

The land in contention is "Legacy Land" -- not the site of an old warehouse or a rural cornfield, but a unique parcel of greenspace located in the heart of a developed urban area. Once places like this are lost they cannot be regained for decades, if ever. It is like a homestead that has been in the family for generations and one sibling wants to sell and one wants to preserve it and keep it in the family. Families work together for the benefit of all and cooperate so everyone's needs are considered and respected. They do not stay at "arm's length" from each other as was a strategy cited by Mark Staehlin in the meeting or negotiate with strangers before talking to each other.

These are not two competing companies but rather two elected governing bodies sworn to represent and work in concert for all of our best interests. We do feel there would have been fewer hard feelings if District 99 had been more forthcoming with their communications and intentions sooner while also allowing for dialogue, debate and compromise rather than insulating themselves on this issue.

Legal battles always produce a winner and a loser with ramifications that can go on for years.

We urge the District 99 School Board and the village of Woodridge to go behind closed doors -- but this time with each other and work out a "win/win" solution to this issue. You have an opportunity to role model how agencies can and should work together to resolve difficult issues. We know you are all individually committed to trying to do the right thing. Now please commit to doing the right thing collectively. We are watching, hoping and rooting for you to succeed!

Guy Klinzing

Laura Saran

Woodridge