

Dist. 99 should agree

to negotiate land sale

A large contingent of Woodridge citizens and a few citizens of Downers Grove attended the Aug. 15 meeting of the Community High School District 99 School Board. Let me paraphrase the comments of the Downers Grove residents who spoke in opposition to Woodridge taking the land by eminent domain.

The Woodridge contingent was referred to as an "orchestrated" group. They are right! We were also referred to as being "selfish" in not thinking of the district as a whole. They are right! And it was stated that we use this piece of land too much. Again, they are very much right! If "orchestrated" means organized, yes we are. If "selfish" means looking out for our own best interest, yes we are (but we offer compensation). If we are using this land too much, then, yes, it shows our need for it.

In a nutshell, here's the deal. District 99 has owned this property since 1967. Thirty-eight years. It has never been used to any great extent as part of the District 99 curricula. It has never received capital improvements. It has been voted down as a site for a third high school three times. The School Board members have produced no recent study that can prove how this land will benefit the greater district at some future point.

The residents of Woodridge have repeatedly asked for negotiations and a mediator. School Board President Julia Beckman stated Aug. 15 that as the village of Woodridge has filed suit, mediation is not now possible. That is pure hogwash. Mediation can take place in litigated matters up to and including the last minutes before trial. As any of the District 99 high school counselors can tell you, it takes two to make a fight.

The people of Woodridge want this land in the center of their community and have been willing to pay for it. The District 99 School Board has demonstrated a total lack of understanding of the real value of this land. The location and size of this parcel of land can never benefit District 99 to any degree, nor can any one board member state how this land is going to be used to educate our children, other than using sale proceeds to make capital improvements and take a bite out of the budget.

So, Ms. Beckman, I challenge you to come down from the high table and gavel, and meet with people who really want to talk about this issue in depth and negotiate for the betterment of (as you repeat often) the whole School District. I urge other Downers Grove residents to ask for negotiation also.

Jody Nelson

Woodridge