

UT BOE approves resolution seeking NJDOE grant money:

Award would provide nearly \$10 million to the Upper Township School District

The Upper Township Board of Education met at its regularly scheduled January 25, 2010 meeting and unanimously passed a motion authorizing Garrison Architects (architect of record) to officially apply for NJDOE Grant Funding currently available for public school renovation and construction.

By successfully adhering to the January 29, 2010 state-imposed deadline, the Upper Township School District has positioned itself to receive \$9,799,860 (26% of the total cost) in state grant funding for renovating the Middle and Primary Schools and constructing a new Elementary School. If awarded, the local share of the \$38,250,557 building project will be reduced to \$28,450,697.

At various BOE meetings and ad hoc buildings and grounds discussions dating back to early 2008, Garrison Architects has been advising the Board of our pressing facility needs and the possibilities of state funding for approved building initiatives. Most recently, the BOE met on December 9, 2009 in the BOE office (the annual Board retreat), which was appropriately advertised and held at the UTMS. Upon conclusion of such meeting, the Board agreed that it was time to take full advantage of the available funding that would help to diminish the amount of money needed to be raised at the local level to properly address our District facility needs and deficiencies, thus, the unanimous approval for resolution to apply.

Prior to the January 25, 2010 BOE meeting, a normally scheduled ad hoc committee meeting was held on January 15, 2010 with Garrison Architects to further review detailed plans and was advertised solely for the contingency that more than a quorum of Board members would be able to attend the meeting. Since less than the majority was present, the committee's report was forwarded to all BOE members immediately thereafter; ensuring that all members of the Board had the most current available information before being asked to approve the resolution slated for January 25, 2010. As with any committee-level meeting, this particular meeting was not open to the public.

Recently posted in the January 28, 2010 edition of the Ocean City Sentinel, an article entitled, "U.T. school board: Big vote, little input," questioned "how board members could vote on a plan whose details they could not have seen." It is extremely important to note that such a statement and much of that particular article were both inaccurate and misleading.

To support this claim, the following statement was also included in the story: "A year and a half ago, the board discussed two different plans, ranging from \$34.5 million to \$42.8 million." If this particular portion of the article was in fact accurate in nature (and it was), one would easily deduce that the two statements in question are mutually exclusive, that is, unable to be both true at the same time.

Furthermore, all members of the Board have been privy to several copies of various reports and updates depicting the details and/or changes of the many proposed plans for nearly four years; with the final version selected as the option that best represents the educational well-being of all students while placing the least financial burden upon the residents of Upper Township.

Moving forward, please be encouraged that this process has just begun to unfold. As communicated by our Superintendent many times at the January 25, 2010 meeting, the grant application is the first step. Multiple presentations will be provided from now through September 30, 2010 (anticipated public vote) and we welcome any participation and/or comments from the residents of Upper Township.

The UT BOE places high value upon the good working relationships that have been established with members of the local press and has no reason to believe that this article has in any way jeopardized our association with the Sentinel or the author of this article. Because of such, and in the spirit of professionalism and journalistic integrity, we are confident that the author of this article will make the necessary corrections and give the retraction the same attention and front page listing that was afforded to the original.

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