

Facilities plan must balance needs with cost

THE ISSUE | Awaiting the next plan to improve the schools in the Corning-Painted Post school district.

OUR OPINION | Whether it comes this Thursday or sometime after, the plan must meet the future needs of the district at an affordable cost.

A special committee is expected to recommend a plan Thursday in the latest attempt to get an acceptable solution to the aging school buildings in the Corning-Painted Post school district.

Or, maybe not.

The committee has met numerous times over the past several months to find the answer to the district's facilities needs that has been elusive for the last decade. Superintendent Mike Ginalski wants the committee's proposal soon so it can be presented to the school board on July 1, with a possible districtwide referendum sometime in December.

That would give district and board officials several months to hash through the plan and eventually sell the idea to residents. Ginalski is targeting December for a vote because state aid for building projects will change soon after and pushing a project start time beyond the 2010 building season would increase the cost of the project.

So, timing is important.

But it takes a back seat to finding the right proposal, at the right cost, that 60 percent of the voters will accept. That margin is needed because the cost of whatever solution is presented will almost certainly exceed the district's spending limit set by the state. If the committee needs more time to forge the right plan, it should take it.

How to modernize the district's facilities has been an issue – and at times a divisive one – for at least a decade. Three proposals have failed to come to fruition, including the Option 2 plan that was approved by voters but shot down by the state education commissioner.

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Not only does the committee have to deal with that history, but its task is more difficult by devising a facilities plan in concert with closing some schools. It's widely recognized that 13 buildings in a district where enrollment has declined is too many.

But the big question is what schools to close?

Of the three options the committee is considering, two would close both middle schools and two elementary schools. Students would then be shifted to existing schools and the district would be rid of the two facilities – Corning Free Academy and Northside Blodgett – that require the most renovation.

A third plan would close only two elementary schools and keep the existing middle schools open.

Estimated costs for each of the three plans range from \$155 million to \$166 million. The amount of state aid each plan would receive and the impact on local taxes is obviously a huge consideration for the committee, the school board and residents.

Future enrollment is expected to drop, so if right-sizing the number of schools along with realizing some savings are goals, then it would make sense to shutter as many schools as possible. While that might make the most sense financially, it also raises the risk of alienating more voters since district residents have proven they like their neighborhood schools. Folks might agree that schools have to be closed, but not the ones closest to them where their kids go.

The committee has a lot to consider in whatever plan it chooses. We look forward to the option it selects on Thursday, or whenever it reaches that decision.

ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | U.S. REP. ERIC MASSA, D-CORNING



Why I voted ‘No’

In the past week, as your representative, I cast three important “no” votes in Congress. I voted against the expansion of the State Department, against \$1.5 billion in uncontrolled blanket aid to Pakistan, and against the misnamed “emergency” Iraq War Supplemental Budget that has now grown to over \$100 billion.

Previously, I voted against the administration's \$90 billion-plus Iraq spending plan because we do not have an ongoing strategy to bring our troops home. It is also wrong to fund the United Nations on the back of the Supplemental War Bill, and it is even more flawed to use U.S. military funding as a way to funnel millions to the Palestinian police force. There are issues that merit individual consideration.

After the Senate modified the bill to send billions to the International Monetary Fund, the House will now have another opportunity to vote on it. My Republican friends across the aisle have spent thousands of dollars in a new mailing attacking me for “voting against the troops,” for opposing further war spending. Now that many of these same friends will themselves vote against this bill, I wonder whether

they characterize this vote in the same light or will it be more duplicity and spin? Regardless of political pressure from either side, I will still oppose this spending package.

At a time when thousands here at home worry day to day about feeding their families, I cannot support significantly increasing the size of the U.S. State Department abroad. This is a time for all of us to do more with less, not more with more. I agree that the diplomatic arm of our foreign policy is a critical part of our overseas outreach, but we must conserve our funding. Now is not the moment to expand our government in this area – especially not without an equal reduction elsewhere.

I also agree that Pakistan is a central area of concern, but I had to vote against a \$1.5 billion giveaway which surrendered almost all controls as to how this money would be spent. In fact, my Republican friends argued that even a small amount of fiscal control was too much and sought to pass an alternative bill with absolutely no control. Without even the limited control of the standard U.S. international development programs being enforced, we will have no say and no ability to know where our

money is actually going. This sounds a lot like the Bush Administration's bank bailout last September, which I was also strongly against.

The stimulus bill, as controversial as it was, represented our one best shot at turning around our economy and injecting infrastructure funding into local, state, and federal projects. In the last few months, we have named dozens of projects which will create and protect 7,500 jobs in our district and I am proud to have helped pass this package which focused on strengthening the American economy. I join the Obama Administration in stating that we are going to try a lot of solutions. Some will fail, but most will succeed.

However, I broke with the administration on these votes because I felt strongly that these bills take us in the wrong direction. As I told the administration, it is not about partisan politics – it's about successful policy, and I define “successful” as being in the best interests of the families of the 29th Congressional District and of the nation.

■ U.S. Rep. Eric Massa, D-Corning, represents New York's 29th Congressional District.

NATIONAL VIEW | YOMIURI SHIMBUN

China key to progress on N. Korea

As North Korea continues to carry out dangerous and reckless actions, China is set to play a large and important role in keeping the reclusive state in check.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote soon on a draft resolution that will enforce stricter financial sanctions and inspections of North Korean cargo following the country's second nuclear test.

The draft resolution was agreed on by seven nations: the five permanent Security Council members – Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States – Japan, a non-permanent member of the Security Council; and South Korea, which is not a member.

The Security Council should adopt the draft resolution quickly and unanimously as a display of the international community's strong resolve to take more stringent actions in regard to North Korea.

Three years ago, when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1718, which called on Pyongyang to refrain from conducting nuclear tests and launching ballistic missiles. The resolution also banned the transfer and supply of items that could assist in the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, as well as prohibiting the export of luxury goods to North Korea.

That North Korea has behaved in blatant violation of the 2006 resolution by launching ballistic missiles and conducting another nuclear test shows that the sanctions were not thoroughly implemented and that the 2006 resolution existed in name only.

In announcing that it will conduct more nuclear tests and launch more long-range ballistic missiles, North Korea appears to be stepping up its provocative actions. The international community must form a firm alliance to rein in North Korea, which aims to unveil a nuclear arsenal as a fait accompli.

Regarding cargo heading to and from North Korea, the draft resolution calls for U.N. member nations to inspect vessels suspected of carrying banned items within their territories, including seaports and airports. The draft resolution permits cargo inspections on the high seas if the flag state of the vessel extends approval.

The draft does not outline specific obligations for each country or allow for mandatory inspections on the high seas. However, the draft carries more definitive clauses than that of Resolution 1718, which asks all member countries to cooperate in taking joint action if necessary.

China's involvement is absolutely indispensable, as that nation is North Korea's largest trading partner and shares a border. We hope that China will act appropriately.

The draft, meanwhile, would implement financial sanctions by not only freezing financial transactions and assets of North Korean entities and individuals to stop them from contributing to the country's nuclear and ballistic missile development, but also would restrict any new loans or financial assistance.

While Japan and the United States sought to have stricter sanctions included in the draft resolution, China maintained its cautious stance. The draft resolution, therefore, is the product of a compromise between the three nations. However, its contents should be regarded as a step forward.

Speculation on who will succeed Kim Jong Il as North Korea's leader also has drawn much attention, and the country has been adopting more hard-line policies that place priority on the military. Concerns over Kim's health may underlie this shift. A closer eye needs to be kept on North Korea's precarious state.

Shame on Hornell Animal Shelter

TO THE EDITOR | Katie Bear, Misty, Dusty, Bruiser, Oreo, Bucky, Domino, and Mutley. These are just a small portion of the names of family dogs that my wife and I have owned in our lifetimes. We are a hard working family of 4 (two kids), that was turned down to adopt an animal shelter dog. We have a fenced-in yard approximately 125 feet long by 80 feet wide and they said our yard was too small for a dog that was half English sheep dog. The Hornell animal shelter took our application and decided we weren't worthy to own this dog that they found wandering the roadside. The reason: Our yard was too small.

Telling us that that our yard was too small for this dog (because he is a herding dog) is just ridiculous. Was this dog “herding” when it was picked up along side the road by the animal control officer? I think not. By their

definition, does this mean we can't own a Saint Bernard because we have no one in the back yard buried in the snow to recover? Or own a beagle because we don't have any rabbits in the yard to hunt? Again I say ridiculous.

With all the foreclosures and unemployment in today's economy, people are abandoning their animals. Shelters are overflowing with pets left behind to fend for themselves. I guess the 4 x 8 cage these dogs are in are better for them than my 125 x 80 “too small” yard. For shame on you Hornell Animal Shelter. For shame, for shame, for shame.

Anthony Buckley
Hornell

Massa has history of flip-flops

TO THE EDITOR | Mr. Massa, it's nice that you have a political machine that certainly gets you enough coverage – one of which is your

ability to use the letters to the editor column in the Corning *Leader* as a political sounding board and a platform to correct your constituents.

Well, maybe the terminology that was used by Mr. Brian L. Miller was incorrect, perhaps the word “two-step” shouldn't have been used, but “Flip Flop” would have been more appropriate. Here are the facts. First you said you wouldn't take PAC money, then, after the election, you said you are now taking PAC money. During the election, you said the Bush spending politics are bankrupting the country, then you vote for two of the biggest spending bills in the history of the country that are bankrupting my daughter's future. You voted for AIG bonuses and then voted against our military's appropriations request because you said it was rushed.

Don't you think you should've read the fine print when you voted for the AIG bonuses; you have already

flip-flopped more than an omelet in a frying pan, and yes, your days are numbered.

Michael Sweet
Bath

Don't forget Smith's contribution

TO THE EDITOR | Regarding coverage of the Martha Robertshaw art exhibit at the Big Flats Town Hall, let's not forget that the individual who made this extraordinary project possible was the late Dorothy Nowak Smith, wife of former State Sen. William T. Smith.

Dorothy championed the preservation of the Robertshaw oil paintings and it was through her efforts that this remarkable example of folk art came to the attention of Ted Arnold and his family. Kudos to Bonniifer Smith Schweizer, her daughter, for continuing her mother's efforts that culminated in Sunday's exhibit.

Dorothy as usual never gave up in her quest and this

project is yet another example of the stamp she left on her adopted community.

Kate Fleisher
Big Flats

Many thanks to C-PP retirees

TO THE EDITOR | I would like to thank the following people, who served under me as secondary principal in the Corning-Painted Post District summer school programs, who are retiring this year.

- Tom Wilcox, driver education coordinator.
- Jane Fenn, librarian.
- Larry Spaulding, English.
- Steve Zielinski, science.
- Marianna Baker, English.

Congratulations to all of them for their many years in the Corning-Painted Post District summer school program and their great contributions they have made to education.

Fran Avagliano
Corning