

# Methacton

Special Meeting

School Consolidation Update

June 23, 2015

# Agenda

- History & Committee Update
- Response from Pennsylvania Economy League
- Superintendent's Recommendation
- Courtesy of the Floor

# History & Committee Work Update

- January 20, 2015 Enrollment Report Presented
- February 3, 2015 Capacity Report Presented
- February 23 & 25 2015 Public Hearing
- March 11, 2015 Special Meeting
- April 22, 2015 Consolidation Committee Meeting
- May 28, 2015 Consolidation Committee Meeting
- June 23, 2015 Special Meeting

# January 20, 2015 Enrollment Report Presented

- District enrollment had already declined from 2007-2014 by 495 students
- Enrollment in grades K-4 had already declined from 2007-2014 by 177 students
- Projected district enrollment will continue to decline over next 5 years by 264 students and decline by another 201 students by the year 2024
- Projected enrollment in grades K-4 will continue to decline over next 5 years by 89 students and decline by another 54 students by the year 2024
- Enrollment in grades K-4 are projected to be 320 students less in 2024 than at the height of enrollment in 2007

## February 3, 2015 Capacity Report Presented

- The Board of School Directors and the public were apprised of building capacity information along with current and projected enrollment, excess capacity in district buildings, current facility conditions, and projected costs of facility renovations in the future
  
- The Board directed the Superintendent to schedule and advertise for a hearing to consider the possible closing of Audubon Elementary School and/or Arrowhead Elementary School as part of a school consolidation plan

## February 23 & 25, 2015 Public Hearings

- The core issues were defined
- 7 options were presented for consideration
- Superintendent presented recommendation
- Public comments heard

# February 23 & 25, 2015 Public Hearings

- Core Issues Defined
  - District enrollment decline over past 7 years coupled with projected decline over the next 10 years will result in 960 fewer students by 2024 than at the height of enrollment
  - K-4 enrollment decline over past 7 years coupled with projected decline over the next 10 years will result in 320 fewer students by 2024 than at the height of enrollment
  - Based on consultants facility reviews, the district has pending capital improvements of \$2 million each at Arrowhead and Audubon elementary schools in next 3-5 years and potentially \$10 million each in the next 5-10 years
  - Annual financial/budget challenges projected with Act 1, capital improvement needs, and rising mandated costs
  - Effective and efficient resource utilization to ensure appropriate use of limited funding – Example- Elementary building utilization is @ 59, 60, 71, 73, and 87%.

# February 23 & 25, 2015 Public Hearings

- 7 options were presented with the consideration of closing 1 and or 2 elementary schools with consolidation occurring in upper elementary and the intermediate schools as part of the potential outcomes
- Superintendent's recommendation was to have the Board consider the closure of Audubon Elementary School
- Public comment demonstrated a profound interest in the process
  - Concern over previous enrollment reports during Skyview project
  - Concern with needs of all students especially those with special needs
  - Desire to play a more active role in process
  - Proud of the Methacton School District and loves its schools
  - Wanted more time to address concerns

# March 11, 2015 Special Meeting

## Updated Superintendent's Recommendation

- Establish committees to gather additional information regarding the possible closure of Audubon Elementary School
  - Enrollment/Capacity/Education
  - Student/Staff Transition
  - Redrawing of Attendance Areas
  - Finance
  - Communication
- Direct the committees to report back to the Superintendent by November 15, 2015
- Present the information from the Committees to the School Board for a possible decision no earlier than December of 2015

# April 22, 2015 Consolidation Committee Meeting

- Established 27 Member Consolidation Committee
- Held first meeting of the Consolidation Committee
- Reviewed fundamental roles of committee members
- Enrollment, Capacity, and Education committee met to gather outstanding questions on enrollment and provided those questions to PEL seeking response
- Redrawing of Attendance Areas Committee worked on a Request for Proposal (RFP) for consultant

# May 28, 2015 Consolidation Committee Meeting

- Pennsylvania Economy League responded to the list of questions as prepared by the Enrollment, Capacity, and Education committee
- There were general themes resulting from this presentation:
  - Why did PEL utilize 2 years as a basis when calculating their projections as compared to 3 or 4 or 5 years?
  - Does there exist a pattern of non-public enrollment that may be impacting the projections?
  - Could the use of certificates of occupancy in 2010 versus the use of construction permits from 2010 make an impact in PEL calculations?
  - Can PEL provide additional accuracy results from other similar projects for years 6-10?

# June 23, 2015 Special Meeting

- This meeting is merely a step in the process of gathering and now presenting information that may be considered in the decision making process in the future
- The information to be presented is in response to Enrollment/Capacity/Education Committee work to date
- No decisions by the Board are planned for this evening

# Response from Pennsylvania Economy League



PENNSYLVANIA  

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ECONOMY LEAGUE  
Information, Insight, Integrity.

Charles Watters

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Elderly couples who will be moving out of their homes to downsize, to be replaced by younger families with children are not reflected anywhere in their analysis.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Does the PEL analysis take into account the recession?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Was new housing impact (excluding age-qualified housing) factored in the projections?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Was net in/net out migration factored into the projections?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Were housing projections for both townships used to make adjustments or temper data for enrollment projections?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Are PEL housing projections based on housing data heavily impacted by the recession?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Were adjustments made to the data to account for increases in existing home sales, which still stand below (2004) pre-recession levels?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Was any new housing unit data applied to calculate the PEL projections?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Was anticipated community or economic growth considered in making the projections?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Please explain how birth rates were used to inform the enrollment projections, in particular, explaining the impact of the great recession and slow economic recovery.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Would the use of a 5-year average birth rate smooth out the spikes and dips in the birth rate data?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Were adopted children included in the PEL analysis?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Did PEL use only the most recent birth data for the two most recent school years to project all future birth data?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

It would appear that the greatest decrease in k-4 enrollment correlates to the first year for which no birth rate data is available. Average of the last two years is used to inform all future years.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Grade progression technique – Are future projections based only on the grade level progression for the two most recent school years (2013-2013/2013-2014)?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Is the report based primarily on assumptions that the past two years accurately represent the next ten?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Were 320 family home sites (table 2-5) incorrectly excluded from the model?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Is PEL's data 100% accurate?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

How do we know if their declining enrollment projections are correct? Who knows? Who can predict the future?

## Consolidation Committee Questions

Enrollment has been growing since October. Slide 20 of the Feb. 23 presentation cites total k-4 enrollments of 1,733 as of October 1st. This shows that enrollments have grown since then by 22 students (see the number at the bottom right of page 3). That's significant when you consider that total k-4 enrollments have dropped by only 170 students from 2004 to 2014 (see slide 14 of the Feb. 23 presentation). So we've recouped 13% of the total losses over that 10-year period in the last 5 months. This growth contradicts PEL's projections of a decline in the very earliest period, when their forecast should be expected to be most reliable.

## Consolidation Committee Questions

PEL points out that there was an uncharacteristically large rise in 2013-2014 cohort survival rate, and questions whether or not a continuation of this increase if maintained would affect the projections. For this reason, PEL offered to revisit the data in September to consider this.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

There are discrepancies related to building level data. The PEL report does not address school-by-school projections. Why are your projections only related to the grade level and not to each school?

## Consolidation Committee Questions

The issue of kindergarten at Audubon: We need to understand where the anomaly of the 105 students is coming from. The projection does not correlate to previous years. Do we know if these children are from apartments or from single family homes? Was transiency in our primary grades, and its potential impact on higher grade levels considered in projections?

## Consolidation Committee Questions

To substantiate the quality of PEL's methodologies and data, can we look at previous studies conducted and match the projections to the actuals? PEL claims high accuracy percentage rates, but they need to explain more deeply how they have arrived at those rates.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Please provide a list of districts that PEL completed studies for in the year 2007. Our intent is to select three districts whereby we will compare PEL's enrollment projections to the actuals.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

In addition to getting comfortable in historical trends, is there anything we know of happening in the next ten years, which could disrupt those trends?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Historical trends in population and housing units did not have a direct correlation with enrollment. Why then, in this study, is PEL using these inputs for projections? (Reference page 15 of PEL Report)

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Relative to the inputs used for future projections, what weight does each input have toward the overall projection?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Would you provide us with a scenario in which you utilize pre-recessionary data in calculating your progression ratios and cohort survival rates?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Additional questions regarding PEL Enrollment Projections

# Consolidation Committee Questions

In reference to Graph 5-6, can you provide a confidence interval instead of a single point entry?

# Consolidation Committee Questions

I just finished reading the PEL report. Being a "novice" in this area, I was impressed overall by the thoroughness of the report. All factors seem to suggest declining enrollment except one, i.e., the anomaly of the increase in Audubon kindergarten enrollments this past year. This seems to be an area worth exploring in depth to determine if it is a trend that runs counter to the substantial case the study has built against future declines in MSD enrollments.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

Additional Questions Regarding PEL Enrollment Projections

## Consolidation Committee Questions

Please have PEL consider to take a look at the marketing reports of the Providence Town Center mall. When the Providence Town Center (<http://providencetowncenter.com/>) starts to build the mall around 2010, they released the Lower Providence household average income and average resident's age. Their marketing reports said that average household income was around \$90,000 per year and the average age is between 35 and 38 in the Lower Providence area across Pfizer and Dow industry park. If our school district doesn't have enough population and economy, the mall management wouldn't invest so much money to build the shopping center over 100 stores outdoors including one movie theatre and Wegmans.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

More input data--If PEL only counts on Economy and Birth Rate these two index are not good enough. PEL should also take a look on the business development in our school district area and how many population these companies can bring to our school district. If there is still lots of top companies in our neighborhood and hiring people, it will bring more population here and pay more tax. Also PEL should predict the input data next 10 years not only short run, especially the US population survey has been done a couple of years ago and that should be one index of evaluating our birth rate. The resident's age is very important because the younger couple has more productive for the birth rate than aging couple.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

School performance quality-- Usually not only one simple reason can cause the lost population of students. It couldn't be only the birth rate. If the school only is willing to develop the sport and not encourage to develop other programs such as history, engineering, music, science fair. The only reason is lacking these programs' teachers. The school should hire more teachers to develop different talent students especially for the stem science. According to my observation in the field study among MD, NJ and our school district, my friend living in the Germantown, MD (the West-North suburban of DC), their school policy doesn't ask the parents' occupation and the purpose is sure to treat all students equally not by parents' social-economic position. So there when the students have great academic performance, in the middle school level, the school already asks the student to take the AP class like history. I am very sure that a excellent business developing area like Germantown, MD and Cherry Hill, NJ and also they have more funding to develop different programs for those talent students.

# Consolidation Committee Questions

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# Superintendent's Recommendation