



Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com>

Re: Disappointed and Frustrated

Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com>
Draft

Wed, Oct 12, 2022 at 2:50 PM

From: Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Aug 17, 2022 at 5:30 AM
Subject: Re: Disappointed and Frustrated
To: Max McComb <mmccomb@ms.k12.il.us>
Cc: Kenny Lee <klee@ms.k12.il.us>

Mr. McComb,

We may agree on one thing – there is no “perfect” plan right now; however, there are plans that make sense financially, operationally and logistically. For some reason, you and several other Board members are unwilling to consider anything but a Jr. High – you’re the ones “fighting” about a perfect plan and being closed minded, inconsiderate and unprofessional, in my opinion. Your belief that a survey completed by 881 people (775 of those w/ kids under 18) being good direction tells me all I need to know about this. Were you aware there were around 3,000 votes cast during the last general election in Mahomet and Newcomb Township when there was a highly contentious school board race but this failed referendum had 5,225 votes cast? The Community came out and sent a very loud and clear message and for some reason, you’re not listening or willing to listen or willing to pivot! Why do you believe that 68% of the voters should change their way of thinking and support you and your plan? Don’t you think it ought to be the other way around?

I’m flattered that you believe I could “torpedo” a proposal – thank you for that vote of confidence. If, by “torpedo”, you mean sharing factual information and encouraging people to get engaged, research and make an informed decision – I’m guilty as charged!

With all due respect, sir, you don’t “totally get it” and you have no idea how I feel! In my opinion, you are completely out of touch with what this District needs and what this Community desires and you’re driving this train off the rails. Are you a single parent? Do you live in a single-income household? Are you struggling paycheck to paycheck? Are you raising kids in this climate/environment and time? Are you a retiree living on a fixed income? Have you talked with anyone that voted “no” to find out why? Have you listened to or engaged with community members to determine what they believe may be the best course of action? How do you know the “no new tax” group is so large? Have you really listened to anyone outside of your circle? Do you really know and understand the needs and desires of the voters?

I believe the referendum failed (and this one will too) because of the plan – NOT the price tag. This is NOT the ONLY option and you know it! This does NOT have to be held up for two years after it fails and you know it! Since December of 2021 (and likely before), many people have offered ideas and suggestions – hire a land planner, find ways to engage and survey the entire community/constituency, and create a long-range plan for facilities. I spoke with five board members, two Bulldog Blueprint Co-Chairs and the Superintendent in the first couple weeks of December 2021 to ask questions and make those recommendations. Now, nine months and one failed referendum later the District is backed against the wall and FINALLY talking about how to engage the community and hire a land planner and determine what’s next – the cart is WAY in front of the horse! The defined “root” of the issue – by the Bulldog Blueprint Committee – is space. They defined the “what” for you and now, the “how” is what’s left to deal with. The challenge/opportunity is space, not a specific building. Broaden your view and look at the BIG picture and do what’s right for the kids and community today and for the FUTURE – don’t leave another mess for future generations to clean up! From the Board conversations, it sounds as if there’s a drive toward a couple K-5 centers in town but you’re pushing a plan that won’t lead to that either? The mixed messages and constant contradiction by you and other Board members is confusing and exhausting!

Will you, at the very least, answer any of the questions I've previously posed?

- Would you build a Jr. High next to a K-2 building if money and property were no issue?
- What is the next step?
- What will you do with a vacated Jr. High and the High School when a new one is built?
- What is the long-range plan?

It appears you intend to continue to use false information, drama, intimidation and fear to get votes this fall. Your "completely true but not truly complete" information sharing is well known and that's apparently and unfortunately your only way of conducting business. What a shame!

Joshua R. Jessup

On Tue, Aug 16, 2022 at 11:52 AM Max McComb <mmccomb@ms.k12.il.us> wrote:

Josh:

I totally get it. I am in complete agreement with your subject line. It sums up exactly where I am at. No one is as disappointed and frustrated as I am. No one.

The latest survey (as imperfect as it might have been) clearly showed the only option that has a chance is the option we chose last night.

If this does not pass in Nov, we are held up at least another two years. And it sounds by your "more to come....." comment that you are gearing up to actively torpedo the current proposal.

If the Nov referendum goes down we are faced with adding a fleet of portables at the JH. The set up charges and leasing fees will be a large drain on our operating accounts and frankly, we can't afford to do very many portables.

The only other option (which plays right to the "no new tax" crowd - which is a large group). is to go to a split schedule at the JH. For example, orange team and staff goes to school 6am ish to 1pm ish and the blue team and staff go to school 1pm ish to 8pm ish. Frankly that's a horrible idea Staff will dislike it, parents will dislike it, and I dislike it. But its an idea that we can afford and essentially doubles our space.

The "no new tax" group will continue to oppose all proposals. So those of us the realize we need to do something, need to rally together. As long as we keep fighting about a "perfect" plan, (and we will never all agree on what "perfect" is). The "good" loses out and our kids and community lose out.

On Tue, Aug 16, 2022 at 9:03 AM Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com> wrote:

That's it...that's the message.

More to come...

Joshua R. Jessup

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is...what are you doing for others?" - MLK Jr.

On Thu, Aug 11, 2022, 15:45 Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Afternoon,

I'm reviewing the Board Packet for Monday and curious why it doesn't appear there will be any discussion for an option to build a 3, 4, 5 building near MPE? I hope it can be considered still and might be discussed on Monday.

Many of the potential staffing, traffic and instructional issues/challenges identified would be reduced (and possibly eliminated) with this choice.

- Your Jr. High is already naturally split into an Orange and a Blue team for each grade level and would lend itself to be easily split between two buildings to share resources and staff and building space.

- It would not add any more transitions; however, if there's concern about having 7th and 8th grade students in LT, it could be just 6th grade there but that adds a transition.
- There would need to be extra staff; however, it would be much less if it were done this way since you could share some staff and teachers between the two buildings w/ the same grade levels, etc.
- It would not add any more traffic (same grade levels and numbers).
- Would not require middle level endorsements for teachers since it would be the same teachers/staff with the same grade levels.
- Would not require any new or different instructional models or confusion about middle school model vs elementary vs Jr. High.
- Would not be as challenging for transportation since they are in close proximity and would not be any more or less traffic than there is now.
- Would not create as much of a challenge for band students being in close proximity and would actually add an additional music space close by.

I'm confused and frustrated and disappointed that this does not appear to be an option for discussion. It makes sense financially, logistically and for future planning in my opinion.

Please help me understand how any of the proposals being considered fit into a long range facilities plan? What's the next step?

Thanks! Have a great day and weekend!

Joshua R. Jessup

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is...what are you doing for others?" - MLK Jr.

On Mon, Aug 8, 2022, 20:48 Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Evening MS School Board Members,

I've been thinking quite a bit about the dilemma we're in and the potential solutions and direction; I'm sure you have been too. I'm hopeful that others are reaching out to you and sharing their visions, ideas, thoughts and concerns. I heard some Board members refer to some of the history and how "we can't do anything about that now" and I don't disagree; however, I do believe there is much to be learned from the mis-steps of the past and you're sitting on an opportunity to begin to "right the ship" and create a plan and pathway forward that will impact generations of students and families in this community (and beyond).

I'm a "word picture" guy - mostly because it helps me understand and grasp difficult and complicated things. I keep coming back to the purchase of a vehicle as I think about the current predicament and the past planning and decision making that has landed us here today. I've never purchased a new car in my nearly 30 years of driving but I've purchased several "new to me" cars along the way. I've always done a tremendous amount of research to narrow down the type of vehicle I would search for - it needed to be practical and affordable and reliable. I'd research the cost of ownership (maintenance costs, tires, brakes, fuel efficiency, etc.) and how well a vehicle holds its value and the resale history. I would determine my budget and borrowing limits and shop interest rates at local financial institutions to ensure the "cheapest money". I would eventually narrow down the search to a particular make and model and a range of model year/mileage. Then, I'd begin to research dealerships and costs associated with the purchase and any possibility of free maintenance or reward for choosing one dealership over another. I'd search within 300-500 miles for the year, make and model that I was interested in and compare costs and miles, etc. I'd reach out to the dealerships to see how they would respond and what information they would/wouldn't share via email or over the phone and get a "first impression" of the sales team and customer service. Then, I'd narrow my search to 2 or 3 specific vehicles that I would go see and drive at a few different dealerships and I'd let them all know what I was doing in the process. In the end, I'd choose the right vehicle from the right dealership with the right deal for me and my family. It's a process that takes time and patience and persistence but it pays off in the end because I end up with the most cost-effective, reliable and practical vehicle that will last for years and serve me and my family well. But, that's not necessarily the end. I am diligent and deliberate about maintenance and care of my vehicle while I own it so it will keep running as long as possible and it will be worth as much as possible at the end of my time of ownership when it's time to look for something new and different and trade it in.

I assume you probably have a similar process when you're choosing how to move forward on a large project or investment in your own home and family?

Would you ever consider walking into a car dealership and telling them to tell you what they'd give you for the car you drove in and then let them choose the car you'll take home without any consideration for the financial impact or practicality or reliability? On a much larger scale, I kinda feel like that's what's happened here. The people who stand to make the most from any project have been allowed to determine all the physical

needs/wants and put a price tag on them for all the buildings - kinda like the car dealer telling you all that's wrong with your trade-in and giving you a value for the vehicle you hope to trade in. And, the same people were heavily involved in choosing the language for the project and options to put on the ballot for the voters. And, now, they're back at the table advising and directing the next steps of this process? Just seems a bit backward to me. Does it make sense to you? The same people who have said for the last 12+ months that we MUST have a new Jr. High and we can't possibly renovate or fix the current, "tired", "worn out", "unsafe", "old" building are now saying it could still be used? So confusing... In my opinion, building a smaller version of a Jr. High, next to an elementary school, is not the answer and will be detrimental to the future growth of the District.

I believe you have an incredible opportunity to reel this in and head in a direction that creates a long-term, forward-thinking, sustainable, reliable, practical, reasonable and affordable solution. What's your vision? And, I'll repeat the question that's not been answered EVER - if money and land were not an issue, would you build a Jr. High/Middle School next to a K-2 school?

Propose a question that would build a new elementary school that alleviates the space issues for MUCH less money AND provides you an opportunity for growth in the future as it can be used for overflow and space as MPE's enrollment fluctuates. Find a piece of property (any piece) for a transportation center. Make plans for what's next and work toward another project in 8-10 years when you have a better grasp on growth and available funds.

Do you have time to engage the community? Could two Board members (one that voted for the original referendum question and one that did not), the Finance Officer, the Superintendent and an Administrator from each school host 5-7 in-person Roundtable/Community Forums to answer and field questions and take input over the next couple weeks in 5-7 different places in the community?

Thanks for your time, consideration and service. And, as always, I'm available by email and phone anytime.

Josh

On Tue, Aug 2, 2022 at 7:49 AM Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Morning!

I do have some ideas about (potentially) better or different ways to engage the community; however, based on what I'm hearing from the Study Session last night, there's not time to engage the community properly before the question is crafted.

I'm concerned that you are basing your decision on 900(ish) respondents in a survey and that's just not enough and I fear you're headed for another failure in November. I believe you all know and understand where I stand on this issue and the road that's been paved toward a new Jr. High so I won't belabor that here and now (again). I believe you all know and understand and remember meetings I (and others) had with 5 of 7 Board members, the Co-Chairs of Bulldog Blueprint and Dr. Hall in December 2021 to ask LOTS of questions and share ideas and make recommendations - including asking for a land study and for you to consider and create a Plan B in case the Community didn't/couldn't support the Jr. High referendum? I still don't have a good grasp on how building a new Jr. High fits into a long(er) term plan for facilities? What's next?

One more question for consideration...if you had money to build a Jr. High (2 or 3 grade levels) and land were not an issue, would you build a new Jr. High/Middle School next to MPE? Would that be your first site/location choice?

I don't envy your position. I'm happy to discuss further and help in any way I can. I have been here for 45 years and I care about this Community and this District and I want to ensure we're making decisions that make sense and are financially responsible and are working toward a long-term plan for facilities, etc.

Have a great day!

Joshua R. Jessup

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is...what are you doing for others?" - MLK Jr.

On Fri, Jul 29, 2022 at 12:17 PM Max McComb <mmccomb@ms.k12.il.us> wrote:

Josh:

We understand that the most recent survey was not as representative as we would ideally like. Due to the very tight timeline we are operating under, we did the best we could under the circumstances using our normal communication systems and social media to get the word out.

It is clear from the comments that a fair number of the social media crowd did participate! However we agree that in the future it would be much better to reach beyond these two avenues.

If future surveys are warranted, we would do our best to expand our email list and/or mail postcards with a link so more people could respond.

In the meantime, if you have other thoughts on how we can reach this group, please reach out to myself or Dr. Lee.

On Fri, Jul 29, 2022 at 10:38 AM Joshua Jessup <jjessup10@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Morning!

I saw the Study Session Board Packet and the preliminary survey results and it's clear that you're not reaching many outside of the District (those without kids in the District) when 97% of respondents report having school aged children.

If nothing else, this process has identified a gap in your ability to reach the ENTIRE community and a growth opportunity for better communication. It would not have been difficult to share the survey on social media repeatedly and the District website for easy access. There was an article in the News Gazette about the survey but no mention of how to access the survey.

There are un and underrepresented people in this community that are voting and you're failing to reach them over and over and over again!

Is it possible to invite people to enter their email, etc. in an online form to create a "list serve" that could be used to efficiently and effectively communicate with the Community at large?

How can I help or support thus initiative? My two cents - if you can't communicate with your entire constituency and listen to the community at large, you're not representing your voters well.

Joshua R. Jessup

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is...what are you doing for others?" - MLK Jr.

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Max McComb

President, Mahomet-Seymour Board of Education

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