



May, 2011

Pinckney Update

On April 25, the School Board voted to create a 27-person working group to examine the potential consolidation of Lawrence elementary schools. This working group will include 4 people representing Pinckney School, which was a target for potential closure earlier this year. School Superintendent Rick Doll will select 3 individuals from a list of 7 recommended by Pinckney's Site Council, as well as one at-large member who lives in the Pinckney attendance area. These 4 individuals will be joined by representatives from New York, Kennedy, Hillcrest, Sunset Hill, and Woodlawn Schools.

Two committees within the larger working group will be formed. One will focus initially on Sunset Hill and Hillcrest Schools, while the other will examine Cordley, Kennedy and New York Schools. Two representatives from Pinckney will serve on each committee.

By February 2012, the committees will conclude their analyses. The School Board was clear that it expects the larger working group to develop proposals for how to consolidate the buildings in question into 3 or 4 schools. While Pinckney does not appear to be a likely candidate for consolidation at this time, based on the April 25 Board decision, it is not yet clear how facilitation of these efforts will occur or what their ultimate result will be. Old West Lawrence neighbors, who were very helpful and supportive in making their concerns known about a possible closure of Pinckney, are encouraged to keep informed of this process as it unfolds.

-Stacey Swearingen White

Newsletter

Old West Lawrence Association General Membership Meeting

Saturday, May 21, 10:30 AM

**Meeting room, Watkins Community Museum,
11th & Massachusetts Streets**

AGENDA

1. OWL Day 2011: plans for 50th-Anniversary celebration on September 17
2. Report on establishing and hosting OWLA web site: webmaster search and go-live date
3. Report on status of Pinckney School (follow-up discussion on October 29)
4. Discussion of Library expansion plans. Featured speaker: Steve Clark, OWL neighbor and principal architect for the expansion project

Mark your calendars for this Fall!

**Saturday, September 17
(September 24 rain date)
Second annual OWL Day**

Plans are in the works to commemorate OWLA's 50th birthday with neighborhood-wide garage sales, art and history walks, and – of course – a potluck/picnic in the evening. A committee will meet once or twice over the summer to coordinate events. Please contact David Carttar (691-8001 or david@carttar.net) to volunteer your time, talent, or ideas.

**Saturday, October 29
OWLA General Membership Meeting,
(site to be announced)**

Our main focus will be on plans by Lawrence Public Schools to consolidate elementary schools, and the possible effect on Pinckney.

From the president

When OWLA held its General Membership Meeting in February, two issues were of particular concern: the status of Pinckney School, and the expansion of the Lawrence Public Library. The future of Pinckney was in serious doubt, due to several scenarios under consideration by the Lawrence Elementary School Facility Vision Task Force that would close the school or “consolidate” it with one of its neighbors. Pinckney parents and OWL neighbors, who were not represented on the Task Force, suspected that these scenarios were based on standards (such as classroom sizes and site footprints) that were not clearly defined, and on measurements that were inconsistent or even incorrect. Thanks to the collaboration of parents and neighbors, and to their engagement of the School Board and the media – the Board decided not to close Pinckney. At least not yet. (Please see the update by Stacey White on the front page of this newsletter.)

The Library issue was less alarming, but still timely. Since the passage of a bond measure in November to expand the facility and construct a parking garage on the site of its current parking lot, preparations were taking shape to finalize a design. OWLA members contacted representatives of the City and the Library with the goal of participating in discussions and reviews. At a subsequent meeting on March 13, the neighborhood was well represented. Discussion focused on elements of the draft design from 2010 that had the facility facing Vermont Street exclusively, with no pedestrian access from the Outdoor Aquatic Center across Kentucky Street; that mixed up pedestrian and automobile traffic around the Kentucky-Street entrances to the parking garage; and that offered only limited pedestrian traffic between the garage and the Library itself. Other concerns were the addition of an extra floor to the garage, and the inclusion of a public-transit center, as the City Commission had asked the project architects to examine both possibilities.

The architects and Library representatives were very responsive: plans recently submitted for consideration by the Historic Resources Commission address several of OWLA’s main concerns. Further engagement by neighbors in the process is still very important, but the prospects so far are encouraging.

Both of these issues illustrate one of the essential truths of OWLA: that by joining efforts, neighbors can play an active role in shaping the future of their community. Please participate in the civic life of Old West Lawrence. Stay informed, and stay engaged. Seek out opportunities to join hands with those around you, to help make both our neighborhood and our city an even better place to live.

-David Carttar

Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods

Particular issues that LAN is monitoring right now:

1. LAN is concerned with the ability of neighborhoods to be informed of and participate in the planning that affects them, instead of providing comments only during the public comment period at Commission meetings. Specific challenges include the approval of “Party Houses” in the Oread Neighborhood and attempts to remove limits on the number of multi-family units that can be built in many multi-family districts throughout the city.
2. The preservation of downtown is a matter of concern to LAN. Approving the development of more retail space than the City can support causes disinvestment in older shopping districts and calls for expensive, and often unnecessary, subsidies to existing businesses. LAN actively campaigns for carefully managed growth and highly selective use of very targeted subsidies.
3. Increasingly, LAN has to weigh in on the actions of the School Board as it seeks to close neighborhood schools. LAN is painfully aware of the loss of value and reduction in home appreciation rates that occur when a neighborhood school is closed. School closings make older neighborhoods unappealing to families with children, dramatically reducing the potential for these neighborhoods to attract reinvestment and remain viable. LAN actively supported neighborhoods threatened by school closings and supported the neighborhood hurt by the School Board’s expansion of sports facilities adjacent to Lawrence High School.

-Kirk McClure

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