

Wrightstown residents resist possible school closing

Council Rock to determine fate of three schools

Dan Beck Community organizers and parents met Tuesday evening to discuss the ongoing debate in the Council Rock School District of whether or not to close select area schools.

Amy McIntyre, a parent of two young children who would one day attend Wrightstown Elementary, hosted the gathering at the Village Library of Wrightstown.

McIntyre is responsible for a Facebook page called "Save Wrightstown Elementary School" and an online petition that has amassed more than a thousand signatures. She created the petition in response to a capital planning group's recommendations to the school district to close three schools, including Wrightstown.

Tuesday's meeting served as an informational session for members of the community to attend. McIntyre along with parent Jennie Schottmiller led dialogue with fellow parents on the facts of the situation.

The district's capital planning group found that because declining enrollment and low funds, it would recommend closing Wrightstown, along with Richboro Middle School and Rolling Hills Elementary. McIntyre, and many other supporters of saving Wrightstown Elementary, said that some of the facts that the capital planning group used are not entirely accurate.

Members of the administration of Council Rock have said that closing Wrightstown would cause overcrowding in Newtown Elementary School, where the Wrightstown students would be sent.

Additionally, McIntyre said that the capital planning group's projections for declining enrollment may be off as well. One particular recommendation from the capital planning group, failed to include 69 students in the projections.

"The projections have a history of being wrong," she said, pointing out that Wrightstown increased this school year by seven students.

The Save Wrightstown group also state that closing Wrightstown will not make a serious enough dent in the \$132 million Council Rock will need to improve infrastructure around the district. The estimated initial savings from closing Wrightstown would be about \$620,000, made from cutting the salaries of the faculty.

"The savings are not substantial," McIntyre says. "The savings will only be realized 10 years from now, if that. It gives the impression of saving to the community, but the facts don't add up and it isn't savings."

Schottmiller, a former CPA, also presented her alternative proposal during the meeting. Her plan would involve turning three elementary schools into fifth- and sixth-grade schools, while the seven other elementary schools would serve as kindergarten through fourth grade schools.

She said her proposal will increase class size efficiency and better utilize space. Though she has not heard much feedback on her proposal from the school board, Schottmiller said she based her plan on a suggestion from board member Jerold Grupp, who was in attendance Tuesday night.

Another school board member,

Kyle McKessey, was also at the meeting. She said Schottmiller's plan has merit. "There is as much to learn in this proposal as there is in any of the other proposals," she said.

The Council Rock School Board has eyed Nov. 6 as a date for a vote.

What exactly will be voted on is unknown at this point. The district will hold two special meetings, one at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 9 at Council Rock High School South and another on at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23 at Newtown Middle School, to further discuss the capital planning group's recommendations among a few other topics.

McIntyre said, "This community is overwhelmingly in support of Wrightstown Elementary School."



VIA celebrates 120 years

Dozens of members of the Village Improvement Association of Doylestown (VIA) volunteered at the 2014 Doylestown Arts Festival where the VIA had a tent to celebrate the association's 120th anniversary. From left are Jo Page, Joan Parlee, Sharon Orr, Phyllis Morris, Anne Sweeney and Barbara Ann Price.

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Bucks author releases historical children's book

Author Paul Furlong has released a new historical children's book, "Emma and Skylark."

The story introduces readers to 10-year-old Emma, who is starting her Wednesday morning in the busy seaport of Southampton, England. Like most mornings, she finds herself searching for the most important thing in her life, Skylark, her beloved, yet mischievous, white kitten and best friend.

Unlike most mornings, however, this is the biggest day in Southampton's history — the Titanic is set to sail right from

Emma's hometown wharf. Can Emma and her father stop Skylark, who is racing toward the Titanic while chasing a mouse, from boarding the giant ship?

Furlong, who is a father of four teenage girls, was endlessly asked at bedtime for "one more story." From those pleas, "Emma and Skylark" was born. He lives in Newtown and works in the financial services industry. Published by Tate Publishing and Enterprises, the book is available through bookstores, online retailers and tatepublishing.com/bookstore.

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