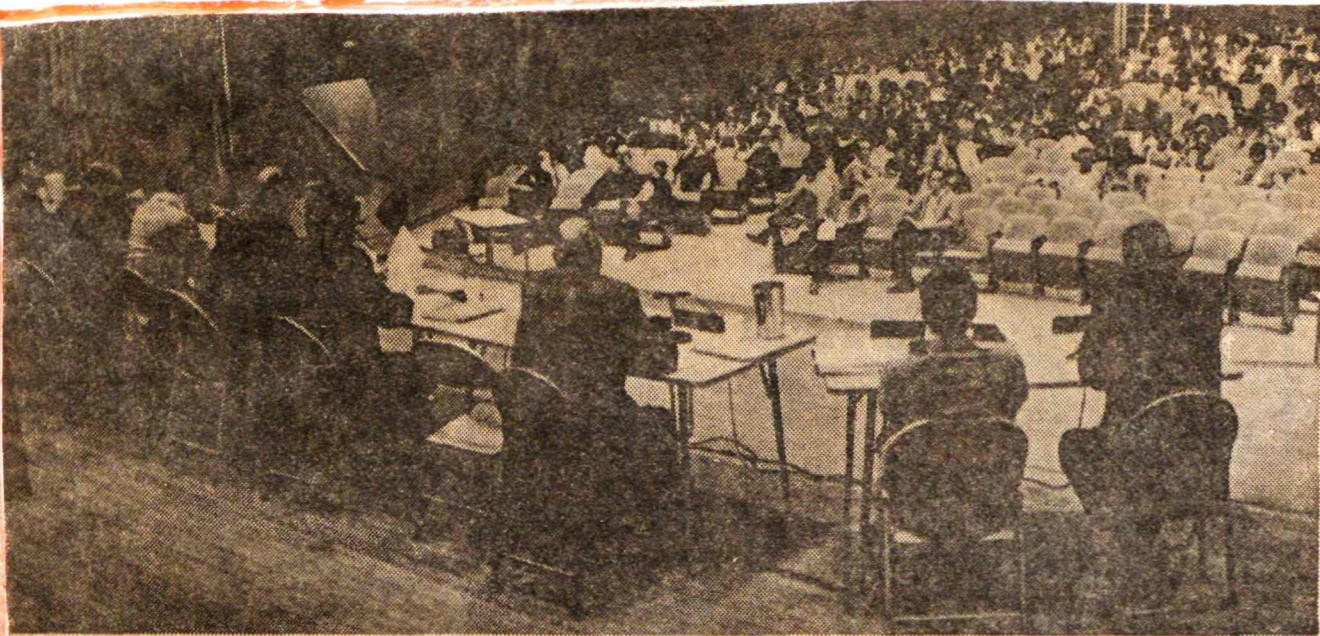


The Times 11/11/76



C-N photo by Walt Rademsky

Approximately 600 people gathered at Terrill Junior High School in Scotch Plains to tell the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education to keep all seven district elementary schools open rather than close one to cut costs.

Findings questioned on school closings

By CAROLYN SKORNECK

SCOTCH PLAINS — Almost all 600 people attending last night's Board of Education hearing on the closing of a district school united to say: "Keep all the schools open."

Many questioned population projections indicating a decline in school enrollments from a high of 7,252 in the 1974-75 school year, to 5,028 in the 1981-82 school year. As of Sept. 10, 1976, there were 6,461 students enrolled for the 1976-77 school year.

Voicing their skepticism of enrollment decline projections, residents said the board should study several factors that could lead to an increase:

—Scotch Plains resident Lawrence Woodruff pointed to pressure in that township for the development of multi-family housing in the southern section of town.

—Eva Finkel of Scotch Plains questioned the impact of the construction of the Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) Newark to Plainfield link, and the development of open land in light of the Mt. Laurel decision requiring housing for all income groups.

—Donald Robinson of Myrtle Avenue in Scotch Plains noted that many houses in the north side of town were occupied by older people with grown children. Robinson said they may move out and younger people with schoolage children may move into the moderately priced homes. Other residents said this turnover has already begun.

—Steve Donahue of Graymill Drive in Scotch Plains asked the board also to consider the impact of Route 78 when it is

finished, wherever it is finally placed, and the potential closing of local parochial schools.

—Mary Alice Hancock of Alert Parents for Good Schools said legislation now in Congress may require the education of 3-to-6-year-olds, which would increase enrollment.

Dr. Reigh W. Carpenter, who the board had asked to prepare a study on the feasibility of closing school facilities, said the enrollment projections were based on a formula that has been accurate within "one or two percentage points," plus statistical information provided, in part, by utility companies.

In the report Carpenter recommended, for economy purposes, the closing of La Grande School. This would cause the reassignment of 318 students, an increase in district-wide average class size from 21.4 to 22.6, and net savings of \$158,600, according to Carpenter.

Ruth Marcus of Scotch Plains criticized newspaper reports that listed only the projected gross savings from the closing of La Grande, Brunner or Shackamaxon Schools without subtracting the costs for recommended staff maintenance.

Carpenter had projected these savings from the closing of each of the three schools:

—La Grande (property value \$80,000): Net savings of \$158,600. Gross savings of \$231,000 less \$72,400 for maintained staff.

—Brunner (property value \$125,000 to \$150,000): Net savings, \$199,050. Gross savings of \$285,450 less \$86,400 for maintained staff.

—Shackamaxon (property value \$100,000 to \$125,000): Net savings, \$161,100. Gross savings, \$287,500 less \$12,000 for increased transportation costs

and \$114,400 for maintained staff.

Assistant superintendent Dr. Perry Tyson indicated the property values, the amounts the district might get from sale of each building, were rough estimates and were not made by an appraiser.

Board president Dr. Darrell Brownawell said the board would not make any decision at the November monthly meeting next Thursday. He said that a decision could be made in December and the adjustments made in the proposed budget for the 1977-78 school year.

Robbie Mason, president of the 65-member PTA Council, said the council unanimously decided against taking a position on the closing of a school and in favor of asking board members to indicate the preference of the majority before taking a final vote, allowing the public to speak regarding that majority position.

The voices in favor of closing a school, any school, were rare. Ed Waller of Belvedere Avenue in Fanwood was one. Complimenting Carpenter on the study, he said the district should close one school now and then start work in closing another.

Mark Grimley of Fanwood said that if the population projections were found to be correct — he emphasized that this was an important "if" — then a school should be closed. Grimley said money should be spent on the students, not on schools or a principal in charge of 300 students.

Brownawell read a letter from Fanwood Mayor Theodore F. Trumpp of Fanwood saying he was upset the board had scheduled the important hearing the same night as the Fanwood Council's regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

Title I Organizes Meetings



Mrs. Betty Rivera, Title I Supplemental Instructor at Shackamaxon School planned a visitation day for her Title I parents. The invitation went home to parents, inviting them to see their youngster in the Title I program. Mrs. Rivera is giving instruction to Steven Green, a second grade youngster enrolled in the Title I program at Shackamaxon School.

During the past two weeks, the Title I program has scheduled meetings for parents of the youngsters involved in Title I classes in each elementary building. These meetings have been either a visitation day, a parent discussion group or a hands-on workshop and have been planned by the supplemental and pre-kindergarten teachers. Parents were eager to participate in their own building program. The meetings have been very successful with the goal of better communication and understanding between parents and the Title I staff.

A Title I Inservice Day is scheduled for April 14th at 1:30 pm in the pre-kindergarten at Shackamaxon School. Dr. Susan Glazer, Professor of Education at Rider College will present her ideas on "An Off-Beat Approach to the Teaching of Reading and Language Development." Title I parents and staff are invited.

The Times
4/7/77