

I sincerely hope to actively support a school referendum the next time around, and I will do so if rationality prevails as the outcome of Unit 4's current process. I'm quite hopeful on the basis based upon reports so far! I want to publically thank the Tier 1 and Tier 2 groups and the current Unit Four School Board for making a solid visible effort to meet both the needs of the district and the communities of interest they serves. I thank Chris K. for his leadership and Steve Carter for his manifest expertise as facilitator. Thank you! What does "rationality" in a fall referendum look like to an ordinary citizen ?

First, the enrollment planning numbers make sense and ADD up.

I've studied the 2008 Demographic Report - quite excellent and professional. However, I've also personally collected 14 years of data through 2015, analyzed it according to solid methodologies, and there is little in the to suggest that we are in a demographic **crisis** in terms of enrollment. According to recent figures, Central High School has 1,250 students. Centennial High School has 1,494 students.

Yes, we must plan for the future because **EVENTUALLY** the district will possibly need to accommodate 3,400 high school students. But I can't predict the future with that same sense of certainty held by some persons of influence here in this room. I am not a prophet. I can only look at the data and do the math. The data suggests a carefully planned phased approach to growth - a plan which meets our school's needs for the next 10 years but which architecturally and financially can accommodate future phases of expansion when and if the student population increases.

Several factors make prediction difficult. Foremost is student mobility. We can't assume that every student in grade 8 will enroll in high school, nor can we predict how many high schoolers will suddenly appear from elsewhere. Also, we all now know that another private "Academy" high school is soon to be built in Champaign and will be functional by 2017. We may infer that mobility of high school students will become MORE of an issue, not less, as alternative private capacities increase. Public high school growth might even turn negative. This suggests that project phasing is even more of a necessity for our public schools.

Nearly every voter in Champaign and Savoy seeks a RATIONAL answer to WHY our two high schools have to **exactly** match with a capacity of 1,700, as long as that figure (or even larger) can be accommodated at a later date? Please build for the next Decade while designing NOW with a feasible plan for future growth when and if it occurs.

I've heard that "athletic concerns" drive these numbers. In my book, these concerns are a red herring, especially when I look at athletic participation numbers of students in our two high schools alongside their current athletic success! If Bloomington-Normal can accommodate a 300 student variance between high schools, why can't we? We've successfully managed a gap of 240 already.

Second, the plans supported by referendum accommodate genuine NEEDS, not "pipe dream" desires.

I applaud the work done to include our elementary and middle schools along with our high schools in the development planning process. Not every project can be a fully loaded Cadillac. I have a Rolling Stones' refrain roaring in my head:

*No, you can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
But if you try sometime you find
You get what you need*

If you want a referendum to pass, I suggest Unit 4 submit a workable plan for what Unit 4 really needs!

Third, the referendum should reflect "fiscal responsibility" in light of on-going economic concerns.

Nearly \$160 MILLION of debt already burdens Unit 4 through 2036, with an annual debt service cost between \$7.5 and \$8 million per year. A credible referendum, if it passes, will double those figures. Should the district shoot for even more then the referendum will likely go down in defeat for a 3rd time. Using of some of Unit Four's considerable reserves might be a wise option, even at the cost of a few basis points on the interest.

I conclude by commending to the Tier Two committee and board the words of Illinois' late great Senator Everett Dirksen:

"When I face an issue of great import that cleaves both constituents and colleagues, I always take the same approach. I engage in deep deliberation and quiet contemplation. I wait to the last available minute and then I always vote with the losers. Because, my friend, the winners never remember and the losers never forget."

Respectfully submitted for the public record,
Mark L. Middleton.