

'Tear the bu

Galion Board of Education n

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Every member of the Galion board of education spoke out in favor of tearing down the old Galion High School last night during the board's regular meeting. The vote to approve demolition bid documents was unanimous.

Counsel for the board, Steven Friedman, spoke for the board regarding the decision to demolish. Facts as the board sees them are that the OSFC did not think it possible for the old high school to be put to adaptive reuse.

In 2005 the board asked for re-use ideas for the old high school. In 2006 the Galion Cultural and Conference Center group approached the board with a broad outline for possible reuse. In 2007 the adminis-

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**Galion BOE president,
Marge McCumber**

tration received a broad outline from the reuse group without any specifics of funding.

In December 2007 bids were approved for abatement because the board would have to perform abatement on the old Galion High School whether it would be demolished or remodeled.

In January 2008 the board had legal action brought against it by the reuse group. The board asked that claims one, and four of the legal action be dropped and they were. Then, for reasons beyond anyone's control, the trial was postponed until July.

On advisement from the construction manager, said Friedman, it would "cost significant loss" to the district if the demolition would not go forward.

With construction costs rising and to secure the lowest bid the demolition process must continue, said Friedman. There are funds now, but there will not be state funds available five years from now.

Friedman reiterated that the reuse group still had not come up with sufficient fund-

ing in the event that demolition was needed.

"We've tried to help them with it [the plan], said Friedman, adding that the board is hoping the reuse group can come up with the funding for demolition.

Bob Zeisler thanked Friedman, who "did a very good job of explaining this.

Board president Marge McCumber said, "This has been an issue for a long time."

She also said she didn't want the old building just to "sit and rot." McCumber referred to all the old school buildings across Ohio that are sitting boarded up because someone had bought them and didn't have the money to do anything with them.

"We need to³ use the money to do what's going to have to happen some day anyway," said McCumber. "I have felt that way from the very beginning."

Board member Carl Stough said the concerns he has heard in the community about the history of the building, with it being on an old cemetery, are unrounded. He said he was very satisfied after carefully looking over the documents for demolition that the job will be "very professional."

"The right thing to do in my head and my heart is to demolish it," said Stough, "and to remember it as it was in it's heyday and not made into something it was not meant to be."

Board member Dennis Long said he has only been on the board for six months and "nobody has come forward to talk to me." Long

ilding down'

moves ahead with demolition

Photo taken in the new GHS Cafetorium

INQUIRER PHOTO/RACHEL MENDELL

Steven Friedman, counsel for the Gallon Board of Education, reviews the reasons for why the board decided to approve the resolution! to send out for bids for the demolition of the old Gallon High School and continue with the process.

said very few people have talked to him about the old Galion High School and "those folks are telling me to tear it down."

"It makes my job easy," said Long, referring to his decision making process. Newspapers are doing their job, he said, but everyone takes away something different. "If you're not involved, you may only hear one side."

Board member George McElligott talked about all the memories he has of "That dear old building," but that is all they are. "We don't have to keep that building to have our memories. It's the right thing to do."

After three plus years of talking about demolishing the building, said McElligott, four or five different groups have expressed interest, but "no one has had what I consider a viable plan. Everyone has said 'please tear the building down.'"

McElligott also said he was very hurt when legal action was brought against the board. "I have never been a part of a secret meeting of two or more members. Everything has been open. We have nothing to gain. They challenged my integrity and the integrity of present and a past board member. We are here for you people, for

the school."

Bob Zeisler said from the beginning of demolition discussions the board wanted to see a viable plan and the board said it would not maintain ownership.

Zeisler said "It's not the thing I'd like to see, but it's the right thing for the community." The overwhelming majority of people that have talked to Zeisler have said, "Please tear the building down."

Additional stories from the board meeting will appear in Saturday's issue of *me Galion Inquirer*.

Reuse committee meeting tonight

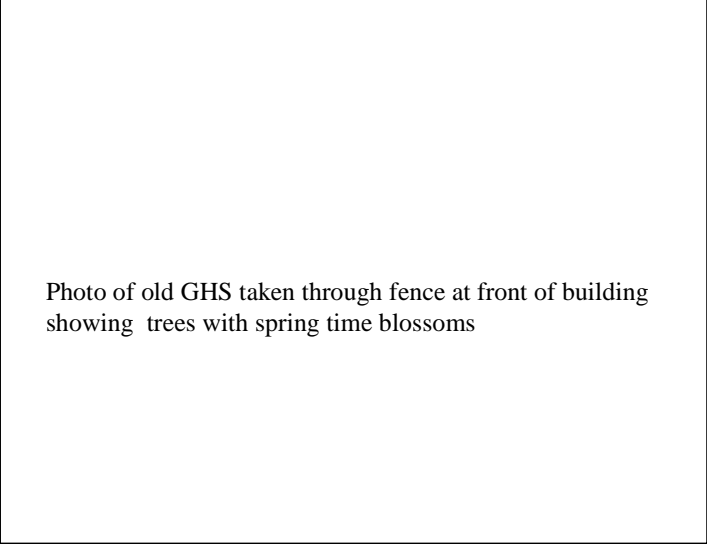


Photo of old GHS taken through fence at front of building
showing trees with spring time blossoms

INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

The Adaptive Reuse Committee for the former GHS will be getting together tomorrow night at 7 p.m. in the lobby of the Central Hotel on Public Square. Anyone interested in helping to save the old Gallon High School is welcome to attend. Come to the front door. Call 419-689-2284 for more information.