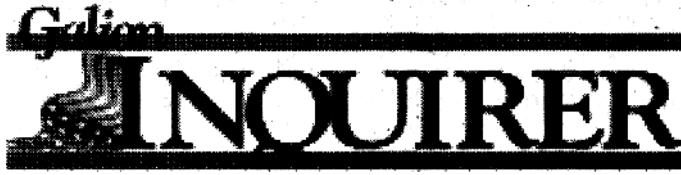


Opinion



Established September 29, 1877

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Getting it straight

Let's get one thing straight off the bat — if a building cannot be put to good use in good repair then it needs to come down. That goes for a house, a barn, a shed, a garage, and the former Galion High School building.

Case in point — the former middle school is being torn down as this is being written. It needed to come down. Wilma Crall elementary needed to come down, as does North elementary. There was no way to justify the money being spent to rehabilitate any of those buildings.

That said there is one more thing that needs to be made clear. If there is a viable offer on the table that will save the building, save the school district money and allow retention of an historic piece of architecture, it should not only be seriously considered, it should be applauded and helped along.

Memories of the old school buildings are myriad. Most are probably worth holding on to. The same goes for many of the memories we have in life, whether they are in the mind only or attached to something such as the old high school building. We all hang on to the "stuff" of life and rightly so. A lock of hair from your child's first hair cut, grade cards, a prom invitation, ticket to the Stones concert, grandma's lace doilies, the china that has been used for countless dinners for generations, grandpa's medals from the war — all are more than worthy of being preserved to share with future generations. But we can't hang on to everything. If we did, we would all need homes the size and scope of the Smithsonian. And some of those things need to be used, not just relegated to a scrapbook in the closet. What good is the china if you can't enjoy it?

Yesterday attorneys for the Galion City School District Board of Education and those for the Former Galion High School Adaptive Re-Use Committee exchanged documents detailing what each proposes as a solution to the "re-use vs. demolish" debate.

The re-use committee offered a security structure in its proposal. This item fulfills the board's desire that any party which would take possession of the old high school would be required to have funds in reserve to demolish the building should the re-use plan not work.

The plan proposed by the committee should be taken seriously and discussed in public session of the board so as to allow public comment on the issue.

In the document delivered by the board an offer is made for the possible purchase of the building by the plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the board regarding the demolition of the building. The purchase price is \$100,000 and the sale would be contingent upon agreement of a number of provisions. The provisions basically give control to the board on what can and cannot happen in and with the building once it is no longer in the board's possession.

What?

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What?

Let's boil it down. I sell you my car. On the title I write in that you cannot paint the car, must keep the gas tank no less than half full at all times, only cinnamon air-fresheners can be used and it must be cleaned inside and out by a professional detailer once a week.

What do you mean I can't do that?

That is exactly what the board is attempting to do.

"The building must be in active and productive use as a cultural and conference center."

No problem —until you define 'active and productive use.'"

"Active and productive use shall mean that a minimum of 75 percent of the usable space in the building shall be used and occupied for a minimum of 35 hours per week for purposes related to a cultural and conference center."

Uh. Doesn't sound right. What if the main event of the week is a conference which runs from 9 to 5 Friday and Saturday? The money for upkeep and expenses should be met but the conditions of the clause will not unless something else goes on there that week as well. Hotel conference centers don't even do that well.

Here's the kicker: active and productive use is defined to include "permanent or temporary display space for artistic or historical items." Sound good? Wait. The next sentence reads "Active and productive use shall not include storage of any item, regardless of the artist or historical value of the items stored."

So, the Galion Historical Society can't rent space to hold valuable pieces of Galion history.

Who else might have need of such a use of space? There is no telling. But the people making the decision of what the space is used for should remain the owners of the property as it falls in line with the zoning ordinances of the city.

No position will be taken by the *Inquirer* on if the building should remain. Only that the decision — and *any* discussion pertaining to it — should be made above board in an open meeting and with the good of the *entire* community in mind.

And that should be true of *any* business venture concerning this city.