

Rally 'round old Galion high

By RACHEL MENDELL
Inquirer Reporter

rmendell@galioninquirer.com

It felt like a good night for a football game.

The grass on the old Galion High School lawn was freshly mown, but the wire still hung in the tree and the decaying cardboard box still graced the front steps. Undeterred by the cooling weather and wind, supporters of the adaptive re-use committee held their rally to gain community support for saving "the old lady and putting her to good use for the community."

"Rescue Our School Adaptive Re-use" read the signs carried by supporters while the music of the Galion High School band played from speakers. The crowd gathered to sing the Galion fight song, some dressed in orange and blue, some wearing their letter jackets.

News from Ralph Cobey (unable to be present) came to the rally via Missy Harris. She said he is a "supporter of this cause" and considers the building "an asset to this community." Cobey also said "it is too good to tear down." Cobey also said the building could help the community move ahead and would be self-supporting within a few years as a charitable foundation.

Thomas Palmer told those rallying that the 1917 Galion High School re-use project is a "once in a generation

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present the total numbers are nearing 1,500. Petition signers come from as far away as Orlando and California.

"You are part of a large group of people," Palmer told the rally goers. "There is a plan to re-use this building. We have a plan. We have made arrangements. We have commitments from experts. We're down to crunch time."

"We've played by all the rules," said Martha Palmer, "but the rules are being changed."

Rally goers asked questions and made comments.

"How can they tell you what to do with the building after you buy it?"

"It's ridiculous that they are tearing it down. It's a usable building. This city needs money. We don't need any more taxes. We have written letters (e-mail) to the school board. I don't know what else we can do."

One man said the board told him "it has to be done," but he doesn't understand why, with the money troubles that the city has, and the need in the neighborhood for the high school's storm shelter. "The town has already lost enough money."

The rally for the old Galion High School went well, Marty Cecil said. Lots of people drove by to show their support and some stopped to ask questions. "They are with us," she said.

Kemle stressed that the board is still requiring \$100,000 in cash to buy the building and \$800,000 in liq-

uid assets for future demolition.

"We have three weeks

left," said Palmer, "before it comes down."



INQUIRER PHOTO/RACHEL MENDELL

Marty Cecil holds a sign indicating her desire for the former Galion High School during a rally at the building last night.

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a once in a generation opportunity."

This is one chance to attract state and federal funding," Palmer said. "This building qualifies for this funding (\$2 million) that other buildings don't qualify for."

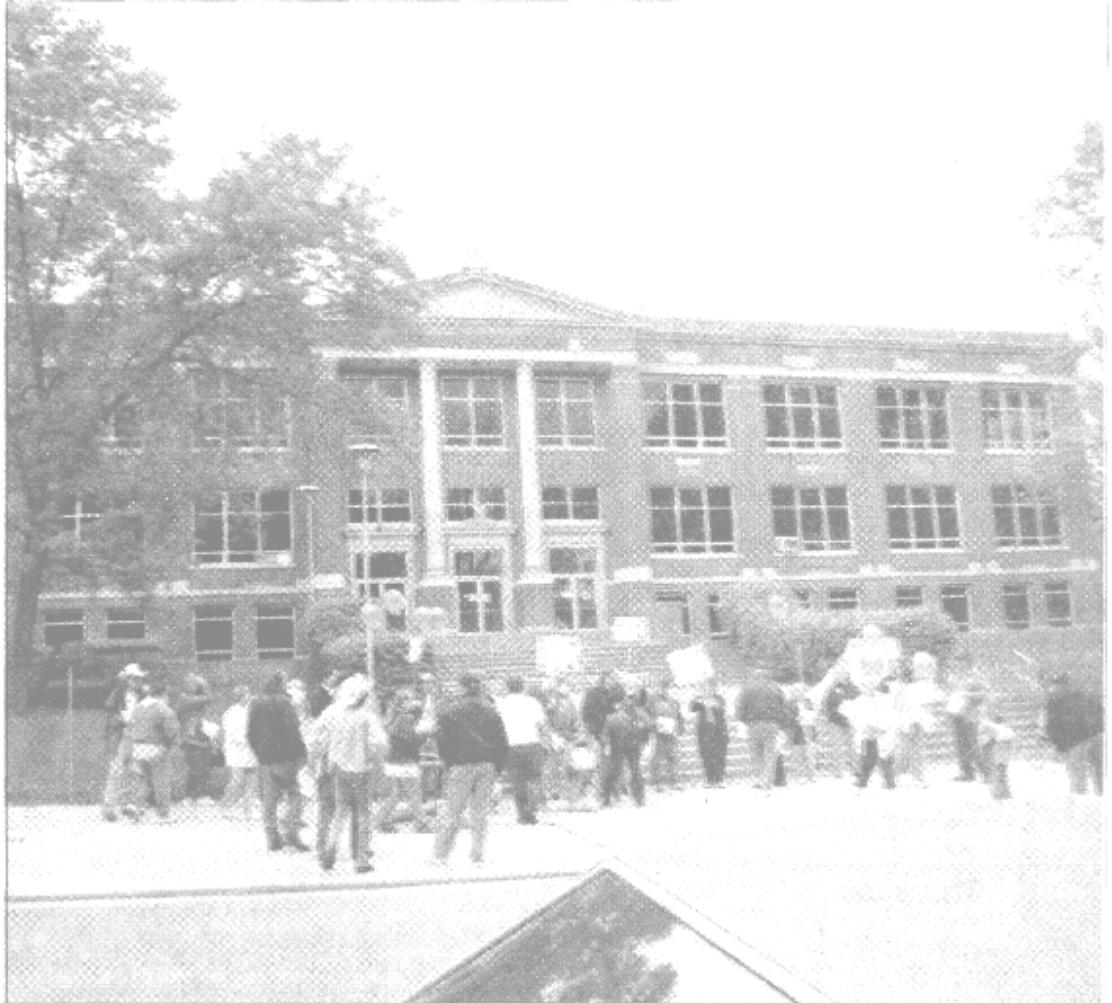
"The cost of the demolition would be saved — 24 percent comes from you," Palmer went on. "When you renovate a new building one dollar invested can bring \$32 back." Palmer also said 100 jobs could be generated in the space and saving the building could stabilize the middle of Galion. "This building is important to the Uptowne."

Dave Smith expressed his concerns for the arsenic contamination, saying the four-and-a-half acres would cost a lot to clean up.

Steven Kermle stressed that time and funding have been lost because of the length of time the issue has taken. He said approximately \$300,000 had been lost in funding (state and federal grants) last year.

It was reported that during Thursday alone 150 signatures had been added to the petitions asking the board to save the 1917 building. At

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A group of supporters for the adaptive re-use of the former Galion High School met for a rally at the building last night.