

Re-use committee issues press release

Statement to the press and to the Galion Board of Education

On June 4, the Board of Education voted to enter into a contract to demolish the former Galion High School.

There will be opportunity over the coming weeks to look back and convey important details of our efforts and our interaction with the School District which could not previously be shared. At this moment, however, we would like to share a few brief thoughts.

It is important to start with words of thanks. We first extend heartfelt gratitude to the four Plaintiffs in the pending legal action, who did something incredibly uncommon in 21st century America — they stood up for their beliefs.

We also thank Attorney John Barga. It may not be known locally that John is a successful corporate attorney, and has served the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) in Seneca County. John Understands business. From the beginning of this process, he has spoken with clarity and great competence about the opportunities for adaptively reusing GHS, and for the importance of integrity in the ways that public bodies operate.

In short, these five individuals have been among the best friends that Galion taxpayers and school children could have had over the last

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erate positive cash flow for the District is a horrendous mistake.

Amazingly, they did so without taking even the first steps to examine their assets so they could make an informed decision. No appraisal of buildings they owned. No auction to determine whether or not they could generate additional income and lessen the burden on taxpayers (this despite one outright cash offer and expressions of interest by developers in at least two of their buildings). No adaptive reuse experts of their own to determine any building's potential.

Nothing. Not only did they simply throw away the largest transferable assets owned by taxpayers, they actually paid to have it done.

In a process in which the District changed their confusing rules more than once — one time within only three or four days — the Board focused criticism on people who were handicapped from the start by the District's ongoing failure to release information needed to create an effective adaptive reuse plan. In essence, they never allowed us or anyone else a realistic opportunity for success by limiting information and access, and then used failure to meet their shifting and unrealistic standards as an excuse to condemn our reuse attempt unilaterally.

The District's mismanage-

several months.

We also thank all of our supporters, including over 1,400 individuals who signed petitions, both on paper and online, over the last several months. Although you are unlikely to have ever received acknowledgment from the Board of Education (other than a dismissive statement that you acted solely out of emotion), you have our grateful thanks.

On Wednesday, the Board sealed an action started by an uninformed and rushed vote. Instead of acting with principle and prudence, they chose instead to waste taxpayer resources to assuage personal prejudices and phobias. And, in so doing, they finally completed execution of the worst local land use and community development decision in generations.

It bears stating, particularly in response to yet another slanted press statement, that the Board continues to ignore the fact that they, and no one else, sit on that public body. They are the ones who have taken on the responsibility of using resources to benefit Galion school children, not us. And in a time when the economy is in turmoil, both nationally and locally, walking away from any opportunity to gen-

ment of information and resources held true to the end. The Board voted to demolish GHS for only half of the amount of money they previously required for demolition escrow, despite OSFC assurances that money would be available for another year, and despite the fact that lower than expected bids could potentially dramatically reduce the amount needed for that escrow. Our Committee had a commitment for the purchase price, and with the low demolition cost, the Committee also had that amount covered. The OSFC and the Committee were actually ready and able to do something positive for Galion, and everything was finally set for that to happen. The Board, however, refused to do anything other than to quickly advance what was obviously a preordained conclusion.

It is especially astounding that the school board members would take such callous and short-sighted action right before yet another levy on the local ballot. Last year, one Board member sent an e-mail to his colleagues stating, "If we let them [the people of Galion] vote on this, when will the voting stop?" The Committee would remind the

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Re-use

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Board that when you turn your backs on the community, you risk having the community turn their backs on you.

In this process the Board chose to needlessly demolish a building known by every living graduate of Galion High School through 2007, and the only known high school in the country to be designed by

architects of the country's first Presidential Library. They destroyed the place where alumni were educated who served their country, state and city in war and in peace for almost a century. In so doing, they carelessly ripped the heart out of Galion — a community whose center is Public Square, not Portland Way North.