

Prepared statement from the Galion City School District Board of Education

The Galion board of education gave a prepared statement in reaction to the signed petitions asking the board to save the old high school building.

Board president Marge McCumber read:

On February 24, 2005 the Board of Education gave the Galion Alumni Association a time period ending on January 1, 2006 in which to investigate all possible grants and opportunities to utilize the then high school building and site. Since that time the Board has listened to reports of a study and ideas for the use of the old building, including those of the newer group which proposes use as a cultural and conference center. Dr. Jenney, Treasurer Linda Kidwell as well as Board members have attended meetings where those ideas were discussed at some length.

We have read the letters, the websites and listened to phone calls. We have copies of the petitions which were based on emotion and did not have enough facts listed to make an informed decision before adding a signature.

The Board has also listened to community members who approach us in public and who voted in November to return two Board members for a second term.

It is time to move on the best interests of the community, both adults and children, that the Board was elected to serve. In doing so,

we are obliged to deal with reality. We appreciate the efforts that have been put forth for the use of the building. Those ideas are grand and wonderful — however they do not have a foundation based on facts or realities.

The facts are that it would be financially imprudent for the Board to spend tax dollars on utilities, liability insurance and maintenance on unused buildings for one day longer than necessary.

The facts are that 76% of the cost of demolition will be paid by the Ohio Facilities Commission if we act soon. If not, eventually the building will need to come down and the community will bear the entire cost. The money for the Board's portion of this demolition was set aside in the bond fund for the building project if we act now.

The facts are that it is not in the best interest of the community to leave another abandoned building stand. Examples of this blight are the former Atwood Manor nursing home, the Jefferson Place Motel, the old Stratbury building and on and on. The facts are that there are no guaranteed funds available for the millions of dollars it will take to renovate the building and bring it up to code for public use. Instead, there are nebulous ideas of tax credits and possible grants (which may require matching funds). The beautiful pictures of the old

building make re-use look like a simple project when, in fact, the costs of manpower and materials for even routine maintenance is enormous.

The state gives school districts the option of demolishing old buildings or offering them for sale. In October, this Board took the option of demolition for the reasons mentioned above. If the Board had taken the option to sell the buildings, the state requires school districts to offer buildings at public auction FIRST before any direct offers to the board could be considered. Therefore, even if someone in the community has cash, ready to purchase a school building, the school district MUST first auction the property, then accept or reject that auction price. After that, the district could enter into negotiations with an individual or organization. This is a complicated process and more complex than purchasing a privately owned building.

There is no doubt that it will be a sad day when all these buildings come down, but the facts are that they must. We have honored the past in our new high school building, and there is a space next to that building which is planned for a new performing arts center to be funded through private donations. We do respect the past, but we must live in the present and plan for the future of the generations to come.