
Core Issues



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FORT MILL SCHOOLS

Election November 3

Four candidates are seeking two seats on the Fort Mill School District Board of Trustees next month. Board Chair Jan Smiley will not be seeking re-election.

The candidates include: Wayne Bouldin, a longtime school improvement council volunteer and past Co-Chair of the 2008 Bond Referendum Committee; Marion Davenport, a neighborhood volunteer in Regent Park who moved to the district for the schools; board incumbent Michael Johnson and Chris Krieger, an active booster club parent.

The two top vote getters will officially join the board on Monday, November 9, following a vote on new middle school attendance areas.



Candidates (l-r) Wayne Bouldin, Marion Davenport, Michael Johnson and Chris Krieger responded to questions at a forum sponsored by the York County Chamber.

Middle School Reassignment

The Board of Trustees has been presented a recommendation for new middle school attendance areas. Superintendent Dr. Keith Callicutt presented Option 3.1 during the board work session in October. The plan is a variation of Option 3 and can be viewed on the district website, www.fort-mill.k12.sc.us. The district is currently building a fourth middle school, which will open in August of 2010.

The district will continue to receive public input prior to the next board meeting on November 9. At that meeting, trustees will pick a name for the new middle school, hire a principal and make a decision on attendance areas. Once those decisions have been made, the district will begin the process of reassigning middle school teachers, using district policy that has been used every time new attendance areas are created.

The new principal will also begin working with parents to create a new volunteer organization (PTO or PTA) and a school improvement council. Students who will attend the new middle school will then have a chance to choose their school colors and mascot.



This is a view of a hallway from the eighth grade classroom wing at Middle School #4. The building is based on a prototype design first used for Springfield Middle School. The building is located on Banks Road and will be accessible from the southern leg of the Fort Mill bypass (Springfield Parkway).

Construction Update

Despite recent rains, progress is being made on the district's newest school. The project remains on schedule and within budget.

Here is an update:

Above Grade CMU - 80% Complete

Damp Proofing - 50% Complete

Brick - 10% Complete

ME&PAbove Ceiling - 25% Complete

Roof Structure - 65% Complete

Roof Panels - 55% Complete

Metal Studs - 15% Complete

Asphalt - 20% Complete

Curb and Gutter - 10% Complete

The opening of the school was scheduled to coincide with the connection of Springfield Parkway at Banks Street. That project has been delayed, but bids have been received by York County to construct the first phase of the project near the school and that work is expected to be complete by next April.

For a historical view of school construction in the district, go to page 3.



New Schools Dedicated



Pleasant Knoll Elementary and Sugar Creek Elementary opened to the public for tours October 4, as the buildings were officially dedicated. Both schools had very successful openings when the 2009-2010 school year began on August 19.

At Pleasant Knoll, the ribbon was cut by Ruth Crook Adkins, who once owned the land

on which the school is now located. Ms. Adkins was a former elementary school teacher in the district, while her late husband R. W. was the Chairman of the Fort Mill School District Board of Trustees during integration.

The dedication of Sugar Creek Elementary followed later in the day. The chorus provided the first performance of the school song for parents and students and the ribbon cutting took place outside the front entrance. The

school was then available for tours, led by student leaders.

The opening of Pleasant Knoll ended the enrollment freeze at Orchard Park Elementary, while the opening of Sugar Creek brought an end to the freeze at Springfield Elementary.

The district is now preparing to build a new elementary school in the Tega Cay area which will ease the impact of growth on Gold Hill Elementary. The new school is scheduled to open in August of 2011.



Pleasant Knoll Elementary Principal, Travis Howard, teaches students, parents and visitors the school dance during the dedication ceremony for the new school. The "Panther Shuffle" is already a big hit among students.



Administrators and members of the Board of Trustees cut the ribbon at the dedication ceremony for Sugar Creek Elementary this month. They included (l-r) Trustee Diane Dasher, Trustee Michael Johnson, Asst. Principal Michelle Grütz, Principal Scott Frattaroli, Trustee Wyndie Havnaer, Trustee Scott Patterson and Superintendent Dr. Keith Callicutt.

District Notes

Budget Cuts

The South Carolina economy continues to suffer and that will mean budget cuts for government agencies this school year.

Sales tax revenue, which is what the state now relies on to fund public school operations, are well short of predictions. School districts are waiting to hear what that will mean to their budgets. Initial estimates suggest a cut of 4%, however the Fort Mill School District has not received official estimates on how much it will have to cut.

The district's 2009-2010 budget included cuts in programs and personnel to meet expected revenue, with the plan to use money from the fund equity account to address future budget cuts this year. The administration is waiting to hear more before making any recommendations.

State Report Cards

School and District Report Cards will be later than normal this year, as the state completes its transition from the use of PACT (Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests) to PASS (Palmetto Assessment of State Standards).

The new test was given to students in grades 3-8 for the first time last spring. Over the summer, the Education Oversight Committee determined how it would grade the results, which will then be used to determine how schools and districts will be evaluated on the new state report card.

Schools and districts should expect to receive raw data from the state in November, but it will be mid March before the report cards for 2008-2009 will be ready for release.

Under PACT, student performance was

determined to be Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced. In order for a school to meet the federal Adequate Yearly Progress standard, students needed to score at the proficient level or above. State Report Cards were based on how many students scored basic (grade level) on the test.

Under PASS, student performance will be reported at three levels; Not Met, Met and Exemplary. Both AYP and state report cards will be based on the number of students that Met grade level.

State testing will be held again in May of next year. Results from those tests will then be used to determine report cards for the 2009-2010 school year. The schedule indicates teachers will receive reports much earlier than in the past.

Growth through the Years

Despite the economy, the Fort Mill School District is still growing.

The trend began in the early 1990's, when FMSD had only four schools (Fort Mill Primary, Fort Mill Elementary, Fort Mill Middle and Fort Mill High). Since 1992, the district has been developing or opening new schools and that trend is expected to continue well into this decade.

Here are the highlights since then:

* May, 1992 - Voters approve \$10.1 million bond referendum to build Gold Hill Elementary School and improve technology in all schools.

* August, 1994 - Gold Hill Elementary School, with a capacity of 700+, opens with some 600 students.

* May, 1996 - Voters approve \$24 million bond referendum to build a new Fort Mill Middle School and Gold Hill Middle School.

* August, 1998 - New middle schools open. The former Fort Mill Middle School opens as Banks Street Elementary, a school for all the district's fifth grade students while the fifth grade wing at Fort Mill Elementary becomes a ninth grade wing for Fort Mill High School, expanding FMHS capacity to 1,200.

* Fall, 1998 - Seven classrooms are added to Gold Hill Elementary.

* September, 1998 - Voters turn down a \$64.75 million bond referendum to build 4 more elementary schools and one more middle school.

* May, 1999 - Voters approve a \$48.3 million referendum to build 3 new elementary schools, to renovate and expand Fort Mill Primary into an elementary school and to convert Fort Mill Elementary into an annex for Fort Mill High School.

* August, 1999 - Fort Mill High School opens with an expanded commons area and several new classrooms, bringing capacity to 1,500.

* August, 2001 - Three new elementary schools (Fort Mill Elementary, Orchard Park Elementary and Springfield Elementary) open. The former Fort Mill Primary opens as Riverview Elementary and renovation work begins on the old Fort Mill Elementary site for use by Fort Mill High School.

* August, 2002 - The new Fort Mill High F & G Wings open, bringing capacity to 1,800.

* March, 2004 - Voters approve a \$62.55

million referendum to build a new middle school and a new high school.

(Additional classrooms are built at Fort Mill Middle School, Gold Hill Middle School and Gold Hill Elementary using savings from the 1999 referendum and state bond money to bring the capacity for each school up to 900 students.)

* August, 2006 - Springfield Middle School opens.

* December, 2006 - Board of Trustees approves an Installment Purchase Plan for \$70.3 million to build two new elementary schools, add a new classroom wing to Nation Ford High and purchase land for six schools.

* August, 2007 - Nation Ford High School opens.

* March, 2008 - Voters overwhelmingly approve \$95.9 million referendum to build two new elementary schools, a middle school, additional gymnasium space at both high schools and a stadium at Nation Ford High.

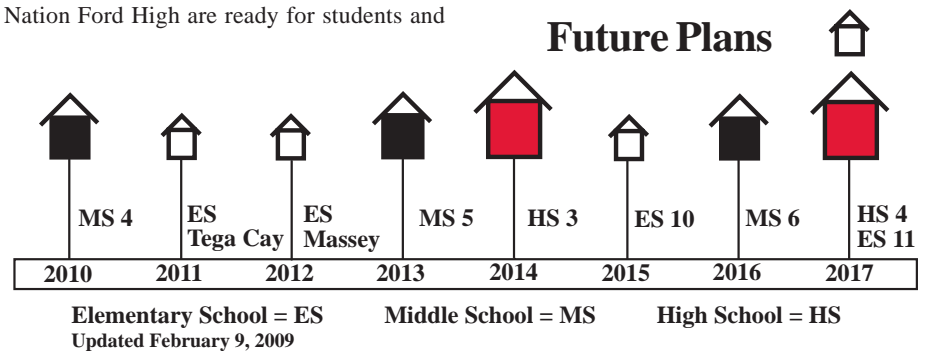
* August, 2008 - New classroom wing opens at Nation Ford High School.

* August, 2009 - Pleasant Knoll Elementary and Sugar Creek Elementary open. Gymnasium additions at Fort Mill High and Nation Ford High are ready for students and

the Nation Ford High stadium opens for use. Springfield Middle School begins using 2 mobile classroom units at Springfield Elementary.

* During the past 17 years, the district has relied on enrollment freezes and portable classrooms when new buildings were not available. Gold Hill Elementary has been frozen between 1996-98 and 2007 - present. Gold Hill Middle was frozen between 2005-2006. Orchard Park Elementary was frozen from 2006-2009 and Springfield Elementary from 2008-2009. Portable classrooms have been or are currently being used at Fort Mill Primary, Fort Mill Elementary, Gold Hill Elementary, Orchard Park Elementary, Riverview Elementary, Springfield Elementary, Gold Hill Middle, Springfield Middle and Fort Mill High.

The district continues to look for land for new schools. All potential sites must be reviewed by the State Department of Transportation. If the state believes the site is not suitable for a school, the site will not be approved. At present, only land for a third high school and a new elementary have been approved near Middle School #4.



Impact Fees

In response to growth, the Fort Mill School District Board of Trustees approved an Impact Fee on new housing units in the fall of 1997. Since then, the district has been collecting \$2,500 on every new house, apartment and mobile home. The money is used each year to help reduce construction debt.

So far this school year, the Impact Fee

has shown a substantial increase in housing activity from the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.



September - \$260,000
Homes - 104
Year - \$592,500
Total to date:
\$25,930,000

Single Gender Update



“Miss Collins’ Super Spies”, a third grade class of all girls, gathers in front of the SMART Board to study math at Gold Hill Elementary. The school is introducing Single Gender learning this year. Some GHES students in second and fifth grade are also spending part of the day in a single gender classroom.

Single gender classrooms were introduced to FMSD students for the first time last year at Fort Mill Middle School. Teachers and administrators now say they found definite benefit from the program, especially in the sixth grade. The boys showed more academic growth in math than any other student group, while the girls’ classes showed more academic growth in reading than any other group. Results in the seventh grade classes were considered mixed.

This year, about 75% of those who were placed in single gender classes last year in sixth grade returned to the program this year. At the sixth grade level, the school changed the way students were selected, by trying to identify those who would benefit most from the program. This process included the use of national and local test scores and classroom performance in core academic subjects.

Studies show that boys and girls learn in different ways. Single gender classrooms are becoming more popular around the country and join the list of choices that can be offered to parents. South Carolina is considered a leader in single gender education and some 200 schools in the state are taking part.

This year, the program expanded to include Gold Hill Elementary where the single gender classroom model is being introduced

in a couple of ways. An entire classroom of third grade girls will spend the year working together, while some students in the second and fifth grade will spend part of the day in a single gender class.

During a presentation before the Board of Trustees, Gold Hill Elementary teachers say they began working to develop a sense of community within their classes on the first day. Research shows that is very important for boys and girls. Teachers also surveyed their students to find out what they liked and didn’t like, rather than rely on what people assume.

So far, both boys and girls say they are improving their participation, focus and performance in their classes.

Some of the student comments included:

- “I like it because it is easier to learn and focus.”
- “The thing I like about single gender is I have done better on grades and I don’t get distracted by boys.”
- “If you raise your hand and get the wrong answer it is not embarrassing because it is a small group of all girls and they understand.”
- “There is no teasing. “
- “There are no distractions.”
- “I am not scared to answer questions.”
- “I like being in single gender class because it increases my self confidence.”

District Calendar October

- Monday, 19 - Board of Trustees, 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday, 22 - 45th Day, End of 1st Nine Weeks
- Friday, 23 - Teacher Workday
- Potential Weather Make-up Day
- Monday, 26 - Midterms, Grades 9-12

November

- Tuesday, 3 - Local Elections
- Wednesday, 4 - Statewide Earthquake Drill
- Monday, 9 - Board of Trustees, 7:00 p.m.
- Friday, 13 - 60th Day, End of 2nd Six Weeks
- Friday, 20 - Report Cards, Grades K-2 & 9-12

The complete district calendar can be found on the FMSD website:

www.fort-mill.k12.sc.us

e-mail - pubinfo@fort-mill.k12.sc.us



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Comments/Questions may be directed to:
FMSD Information Line - 548-8695

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