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PRESS RELEASE

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~~~~ ***Breaking News Announcement*** ~~~~

Community High School District #99  
Superintendent Hank Thiele Announces

***Secured Entrances***

At Both **DG North** and **DG South** Could Be Done  
***As Soon As The End Of This School Year***

&

***Paid For Out Of The Fiscal Year 2018 Budget!!!***

Downers Grove, Du Page County, Illinois – Thursday, 8 March 2018

During his presentation at the pre-referendum “Finance Night” held at the district’s Administrative Service Center last night (Wednesday, March 7, 2018 from 7-8:30 p.m.), recently hired Superintendent Hank Thiele made the announcement that his administration could have in place the visitor entrance “buzzer” system at both **DG North** and **DG South** **by the end of this school year**. Furthermore, Mr. Thiele and his financial assistant Mark Staehlin reassured the parents, community members and media in attendance that securing the front entrances of the two buildings during school hours (“visitors”) was a **top priority** of the Board of Education and that the long-overdue security feature could be financed out of monies currently on hand **and within the current fiscal year 2017-2018 budget**.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead*

“This is very welcomed news,” said Tom Sleeter, *Downers Grove Watch* chairman.

**“Furthermore, Superintendent Thiele reassured those in attendance at the meeting last night that the visitor entrance ‘buzzer’ system will be constructed at the main ‘visitor’s entrances’ of each high school regardless of the outcome of the \$201,813,267 March 20<sup>th</sup> building expansion and maintenance referendum. This announcement will hopefully aid in reducing the understandably high level of emotional anxiety currently found within our schools, homes and the community. Apparently, many members of the community who have been wrestling with how they are going to vote on the referendum were concerned about what a failed referendum would mean for security at the two schools. As parents, both my wife and I are relieved to hear that Superintendent Thiele and his staff are working diligently to get this much needed ‘visitor’s entrance’ security plan into effect as soon as possible and possibly before the end of this school year,” said Sleeter.**

Superintendent Thiele told those in attendance that after the recent tragedy in Florida, he and his “security” staff and fellow administrators had once again reviewed the security vulnerabilities at the main entrances and had decided to finally address the issue by installing a “buzzer” system which effectively quarantines visitors to the area between the two sets of exterior doors until they can be properly screened. By “locking” all visitors between the two sets of exterior doors, no one will be able to gain entrance to the building. Currently, visitors freely and without impediment walk into both high schools and only after entry, are they greeted by staff who check IDs and direct them to their destination.

“Putting in place this relatively inexpensive security feature at the primary visitor entrances is long-overdue and should have been a budgetary priority of the Board of Education over items such as expensive plastic turf on practice fields and other low-priority budget items. Students, staff, parents and the community-at-large will soon have in place a ‘visitor quarantine’ staging area between the two sets of exterior doors that many suburban high schools in the collar counties have had in place for many years,” said *Downers Grove Watch* treasurer Bill Wrobel. “Controller Mark Staehlin should have found the money for these entrances a decade or more age,” said Wrobel.

Last night’s discussion of the entrance door “TSA-like security screening vestibules” was initiated by an audience member who inquired about the following picture he had brought with him which has been widely circulated by the Board of Education within many of the four-color mailers the Board of Education has mailed to the community for the upcoming referendum.



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The audience member informed Superintendent Thiele, Controller Staehlin and board member Michael Davenport who was also in attendance that the computer-aided rendering had many parents within the community, especially his wife and her friends, very confused and emotionally distressed.



The circulated rendering projects an image wherein both arriving students as well as visitors during the school day will have to proceed through a “TSA-like” airport screening before entering the building. As pointed out by the audience, such an ingress impediment would leave hundreds of students vulnerable to an act of violence outside the secured building while waiting to gain entrance as well as requiring both students and staff to arrive well ahead of the scheduled beginning of school in order to be screened before they are allowed entrance.

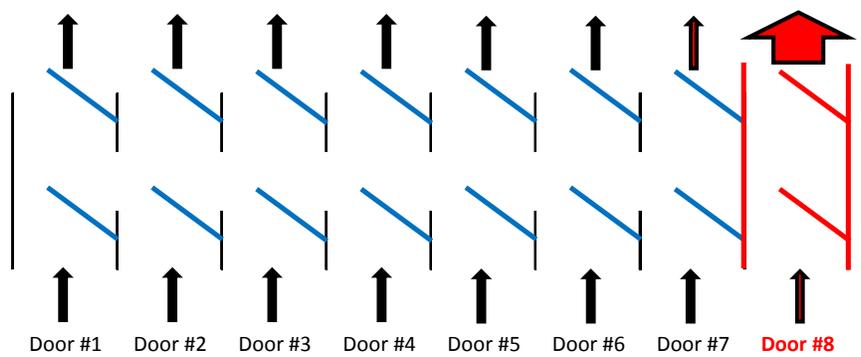
Thiele acknowledged to those in attendance that the entry “vestibule” images that his administration and the Board of Education have circulated throughout the community are not accurate and do not depict the relatively inexpensive security system that will be installed possibly before the end of this school year.

Board member Michael Davenport was seen nodding in agreement when Superintendent Thiele stated the computer-generated images of the entrances at **DG North** and **DG South** are not accurate and that it is not the intention of the Board of Education to effectively “lock” hundreds of arriving students and staff out of the building before being subjected to some sort of individual-by-individual TSA-like airport screening process.

Superintendent Thiele acknowledged that the inaccurate images were produced by the architectural firm (Wight & Co.) who will be hired if the March 20<sup>th</sup> referendum is approved by the voters (or, if it fails, and a scaled down version is later approved at a subsequent referendum in November 2018 or April 2019 or March 2020).

Throughout the Q&A portion of the “Finance Night” meeting, the audience member who began the discussion of the “TSA-like security screening vestibules” relentlessly kept changing the subject back to that issue.

Another member of the audience who participated in the Q&A stated that she was a high school teacher and that she had personally seen secured entrances at other high schools in Du Page County and that these “air lock” entrances had been in place for at least 5 years. What the administration and board of education have referred to as “vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances” are nothing more than an inexpensive modification to the exterior double set of entrance doors. The following graphic shows how all eight passageways are reconfigured so that during the school day, when all of the outer doors become locked, one passageway (#8) becomes the secure entrance. A glass partition is installed to stop the “visitor” from entering exterior door #8 and then entering the building through interior doors #1-#7. A buzzer is installed and the isolated “visitor” is asked to present ID.



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According to the *Downers Grove Watch* member who was in attendance, “The man seated at the front of the audience was relentless. The subject would be changed, but he would politely redirect the conversation and Thiele and Staehlin back to the issue of security. Over the course of 45 minutes during the Q&A and after a certain amount of apparent resistance on the part of Thiele, he finally received the clear and direct answers to the questions that he had apparently been directed by his wife to get.”

“He kept saying, ‘my wife and her friends want to know X or Y regarding’ the TSA-like images, how high on the school board’s list of priorities are these entrances, how soon can the ‘buzzer system’ be in place, how expensive and complicated can a ‘buzzer’ system be, why wasn’t this done years ago, and, most importantly, what if the referendum fails – will the entrances still be secured?”, reported *Watch* member O’Connell.

“After not being able to elicit a definitive response, he finally cleverly asked a direct and focused question not to Thiele but instead to Controller Staehlin ... If the referendum passes, what projects will be completed during the summer of 2018 from the first batch of referendum bonds (\$9,000,000) that Staehlin had previously said would be sold this spring? Without hesitation, Staehlin looked directly at the man and said ... ‘air conditioning’. He did not say ... ‘the #1 priority of the board of education which is security at the main entrances and air conditioning’; Staehlin simply stated ‘air conditioning’. There was an awkward pause in the room until Thiele blurted out the additional words .... ‘And security. Security and air conditioning.’ I witnessed Davenport who was seated in front of me ... drop his head and look down at his shoes. The determined gentleman had finally pierced the castle wall and had separated the two administrators.” said O’Connell.

Shortly after that, Superintendent Thiele announced to the assembled members of the community and staff that the “vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances” are a top priority of the Board of Education and that his administration could possibly have the “vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances” installed by the end of this school year.

“In order to ensure that the issue was clarified beyond any doubt, the gentleman circled back once again and asked Thiele directly whether the ‘vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances’ could be done this school year from funds on hand even if the referendum failed. Thiele said ‘Yes’. Shortly thereafter, the gentleman stood up and apparently was sending a text to someone as he walked out of the meeting before its conclusion,” reported O’Connell.

According to the *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* published by Controller Staehlin for the fiscal year ending last June 30, 2017, the Operations and Maintenance fund had an end-of-year 2017 surplus of \$709,172 (revenues minus expenses). Additionally, Controller Staehlin stated at last evening’s “Finance Night” that the school district had collected nearly \$1,300,000 of surplus property taxes (and accumulated interest) for the payment of principal and interest on the last referendum bonds (1998) above what was needed. Those bonds were for major expansions of both schools and maintenance and the accumulated surplus (~\$1,300,000) could be used by the Board of Education to cover the costs for the “vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances”.

“The *Downers Grove Watch* strongly supports Superintendent Thiele and the Board of Education in their decision to take the issue of ‘vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances’ off the list of projects that are part of the upcoming referendum decision facing the community. It is truly a sign of leadership and commitment to the students, staff, parents and members of the community to announce their continued commitment to the safety and security of everyone who visits our schools. We look forward to the secured entrances and truly hope that Superintendent Thiele and his staff are able to have them installed before the end of this school year. We fully expect that this announcement will help to reduce the emotional anxiety currently confronting our school community.” stated Chairman Sleeter.

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## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

### AIR CONDITIONING:

During his presentation at the pre-referendum “Finance Night,” school district Controller Mark Staehlin publicly announced for the first time that the complete “air conditioning” of both schools will cost approximately \$8,000,000 (5.8% of referendum project costs). *That leaves \$128,100,000 of bond proceeds for the remaining expansion projects (such as glass domes over current open-air areas).*

### VISITOR SECURITY QUARANTINE AND SCREENING:

The images below have been prominently displayed within the materials distributed by the Board of Education as part of their community outreach regarding the upcoming \$201,813,267 March 20th building expansion and maintenance referendum. These are the “vestibule ‘Air Lock’ entrances” which were previously on the list of “referendum” projects but which now will be completed regardless of the outcome of the balloting.

It has been estimated that the \$201,813,267 March 20th building expansion and maintenance referendum will increase property taxes by approximately \$196 year for a \$300,000 residence (market value) over 23 years (tax years 2018- 2040). (See attached debt service schedule)



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