

**April 21, 2011 Community Council Meeting, DaVinci Charter School
Summary submitted by Michael Tetrault – Parent Representative to the Board**

Much of the discussion for the meeting this month centered around the desire of DaVinci Charter School to find a new location for the following school year. Close to 30 parents, teachers and board members were present at the meeting.

Announcements were also made to report the recent passing of board member Sharon Dollinger who had contributed greatly to many board activities in the short time she was involved with our school. Her talents will be sorely missed as we move forward with our plans.

Also, it was mentioned that the board of directors are seeking nominations for current vacancies that exist on our school board. You may contact me directly if you have someone who you feel would be a great addition to our DaVinci community . Simply e-mail me the contact information of the person(s) interested and I can send out a prospective board member information sheet and questionnaire that can be filled out and returned to me electronically or at the school. This would not guarantee your addition to the board, but it would be considered along with all the other applications and evaluated based upon current needs that we are trying to fill.

Cindy began the discussion by first explaining the history of how we have been moving toward the idea of relocating the school for the past couple years now. After having gotten on sound financial footing, the reality of making such a move has become more plausible over the past year and a half.

A series of recent events have sparked a more concerted effort to make the move a reality – one of them being the current real estate market.

With many properties in the Garden City area available and affordable, it seemed prudent to have a real estate agent keep an eye out for buildings that would be a good fit in keeping with not just our current need, but would allow for some growth as well. Cindy expressed frustration in the fact that every time we seemed to have found an ideal location, the building would sell before we even had a chance to reach the negotiation phase of the deal. Another hitch would be the loss of bussing (including a significant portion of our students) if we were to leave the Garden City catchment zone and look elsewhere for a property.

That has seriously limited our ability to find just the right fit for our new school since our charter requires us to geographically remain within Garden City limits. Our ability to build a new facility from scratch on an empty lot is also not available to us as we cannot afford to purchase both land and then a building at this time.

Another series of events that have recently transpired to help speed up the process of moving is the addition of a couple businesses in close proximity to the school that don't fit well for both students and the school community in general (brewing and gun/ammo store next to the kindergarten wing). Based upon current zoning law, we have no recourse about who moves in and out of the properties adjacent to our school. No one

was passing judgment on the owners or patrons of those properties, but if we were to have our own building then the issue of wondering who your neighbors were going to be could be rendered moot in the future.

The building we are currently looking at acquiring is located on Glenwood just over the bridge as you cross over the river heading toward State Street. It is located on the West side of the road behind the Panda Express. We would be the sole tenant and would have the ability to customize it somewhat to fit our specific needs (in the case of teachers – the oft repeated phrase of having doors and walls was repeated throughout the discussion)! Concerns were raised about trading one strip mall location for another, but at the current time, it has the most potential out of all properties surveyed.

We would have the option to lease and/or lease to buy at more or less the same rate we right now pay as tenants in the current location. Teachers expressed excitement to be able to customize their learning spaces, put in a grassy area with a possible basketball court and in time a garden area as well. They would work toward creating partnerships with local businesses in that location, and it would also be a short walk to the greenbelt, river and the Garden City Library. There would also be the reestablishment of a bus route that would give students access to city busses once again for field trips to many other locations throughout the city.

The many positives significantly outweighed the expressed concerns that were brought up throughout the evening and overwhelmingly the patrons in attendance were content to know that at this time the school was on sound financial footing and that acquiring the property in question would not pose any financial hardship to the future functioning of our school.

Negotiations are currently underway with the owner of the property we are seeking and patrons will be kept up to date in newsletters/e-mails from the school as negotiations continue. Teachers are making plans to place their rooms in storage pods at the conclusion of the school year and will be giving more information out to solicit volunteers to help with this process. Pods will be stored in a secure location until move-in at our new location is settled.

The director of the school also has contingency plans in place that would allow for extra time to be given to complete the building in time for move-in if the need arises. Work is continuing on a school calendar that for students would not start until after Labor Day (giving more time for the building to be customized and finished) and community partnerships are in place that would allow for temporary use of facilities if for some reason the building was not quite ready to move in after the Labor Day holiday.

Please contact me if you have any other questions or concerns or if you have a prospective board member in mind I should know about.

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