

BKW chooses \$5.3M plan for new elementary school . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Committee, would have linked the two Berne schools.

In October, the board had granted conceptual approval to a scaled-down \$5 million building plan, which would have added four classrooms to the elementary school and eight to the secondary school, as well as making renovations.

In November, the board reconsidered because of concerns raised by the superintendent over taxpayer support in the midst of a recession. The board looked at, among other things, a plan first proposed by vice-president Ronald Conners, for a new elementary school. Conners, who was elementary school principal at Berne for 25 years, said, "In the history of this district, there's never been an elementary school built as an elementary school." With his proposal, he told the board, "You're producing something that can grow with a plan rather than Topsy-style growth."

The elementary school plan was initially supported by board member Garry Porter, while members Joseph Golden and Karol Harlow voted against it. Lendrum cast the deciding vote against the plan in September, explaining that, "I thought it was an excellent idea, and I think the others did too, but I voted against it because of the time problem. We need extra space as soon as possible, and this would take a lot longer."

New views
Viewpoints changed since September. Golden said at Saturday's workshop, "I was opposed to the primary school from the beginning." But, referring to comments Robert Mohr made at a December board meeting, Golden continued, "You can't take away people's opportunity to spend their money if they want. I think we should go with the primary school on the first vote."

Lendrum echoed his sentiments: "We have to give the people the choice, and if it doesn't go, come back with something else."



Scouting a Future: Superintendent of Schools Robert Drake, right, and Richard Ronconi, who was head of the School Improvement Committee when it developed the building plan for last year's defeated \$9.8 million bond, look over the proposed site for a new elementary school after Saturday's workshop.

Karol Harlow said, "I was (against it), too, because we needed something right away ... But the (economic) climate isn't that good now ... So, if it takes a little longer, who cares?"

Golden also said there may have been an economic change in the district. Referring to the 1990 Comprehensive Assessment Report for BKW, he noted that the percentage of students whose families' primary means of support is public welfare had changed from 11-20 percent in previous years to 1-10 percent for 1990. "People coming into the district have higher incomes," said Golden, "although that doesn't mean they want to share it with the school."

Ideal solution
"I think the new building would be the ideal solution," said Superintendent Drake, "but I think we need renovations to the other schools as well." He listed as necessary: new boilers, new clocks and public address systems, and a new well and water storage system. Conners said that the cost of building the new primary school along with those renovations to the existing schools would cost a total of \$600,000 more than the plan to add four classrooms to the elementary school and eight to the high school.

Drake had said earlier that in building a separate primary school, state mandates wouldn't

have to be met in existing buildings, thereby cutting building costs. But he pointed out that a separate primary building would involve additional operational costs, for a separate principal, nurse, cafeteria staff and custodians. Drake estimated that annual operating costs for a separate elementary school would total \$140,000. Conners estimated those costs at \$125,000 and said, "You'd have to increase operating costs with the other, too."

Architect Edward Luzine noted that the largest the state likes to see schools is with 28 classrooms and 256 students — a limit that would be surpassed by 1994 enrollment figures at the elementary school.

"The primary building gives the district the greatest choices for future expansion, and the greatest flexibility," said Luzine. The board was looking at a plan drafted in 1971, which includes 14 classrooms, a cafeteria, gym, library, nurse's office, and principal's office, which Conners referred to as a "half-school." Sketched in were rooms that could double the school's size at a future date. Luzine said that building costs, at this stage, were estimates.

Timetable
Architect Luzine said that an Environmental Impact Statement would have to be prepared and reviewed by the state before the bond could be put to vote. The process can take three to six months. Luzine estimated it would cost between \$7,000 and \$8,000 to prepare the EIS.

After the state education department has accepted the draft EIS, the board will decide what it wants to include in a bond. Luzine said that early September would be the best time for a public vote.

Vice-president Conners estimated the new school would be ready for use two years after the vote passed.

United stand
Katherine Bartley, chairwoman of the School Improvement Committee, told the board at Saturday's workshop: "Last time, we sensed the board wasn't unanimous." Noting that the 1989 bond for \$9.8 million failed by 200 votes, she said, "You can make an impression on those 200 voters. You were elected and can do that ... Administrators are thought to always want the best

... Taxpayers are going to say they can do with less. We're at the point, we can't do without. You have to stand together and make that message. And I think it will pass."

Lendrum told her, "That was the purpose of this meeting. I swore we were not leaving here unless we were in agreement."

After the meeting, as members of the board and a handful of onlookers walked over the grounds where the proposed elementary school would be built, Lendrum said: "I feel that everyone is really enthusiastic." She said she thought there was a "good possibility" the bond would pass in September and speculated the recession may help the district: "So many construction companies are begging for work, we may get lower bids."

Board member Porter said of his reason for supporting the elementary school plan: "Adding on would just be crowding the space we already had ... As it turned out, I think everybody thinks it's the best idea." On the bond's chances of passing, he said, "The people I talk to that voted against the first bond would go for space with lesser cost."

Vice-president Conners said: "I think it's a good plan ... better than the other ... we're not taking away any playground space, we're not overcrowding the buildings more than they're overcrowded already ... I think it's cheaper to build an elementary school than a high school ... it's a long-range plan, taking care of our present problem, plus giving us future possibilities."

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Leg-trapped cat recovers; finds a new home

By Michele Liberti-Lansing
VOORHEESVILLE — Because of a Voorheesville woman's compassion, a young female stray cat who had been rescued from a steel-jaw leghold trap where it had been tormented and ensnared for three days, found a home — not just for the holidays, but forever.

After reading the Dec. 13 issue of *The Enterprise*, which related the horrifying story of a cat whose right front paw had been pinned in an abandoned, rusty steel-jaw leghold trap for three days, and had gone without food, water or shelter, Michelle Deschenes, a village resident, who describes herself as "a sucker for an animal," knew she had to adopt the cat.

After its rescue by Guilderland Animal Control Officer Pat House, the cat was taken to Dr. Edward Becker's Animal Hospital, where, for weeks, it was lovingly cared for by Becker and his staff. (House had found the cat in a wooded area near routes 20 and 155, its paw caught in the trap and severely mutilated; the cat was in agonizing pain, very thin, dehydrated, and suffered from exposure.)

After rescuing the animal, House brought it to Becker for medical attention. Becker, who had to anesthetize the cat to get its paw out of the trap, treated the feline with antibiotics and

I.V. fluids for about a week; he was then able, through a delicate operation, to salvage a good deal of the cat's pad — during the operation, he moved one of the pads to the center of the foot, enabling the cat to walk again).

While the cat recuperated at The Animal Hospital, Becker said he was prepared to have the animal remain there until a loving home could be found — the fortunate feline did not have to wait very long.

After reading *The Enterprise*, Deschenes contacted The Animal Hospital, was approved as an adoptive "parent," and brought the cat home on Dec. 18, just in time for Christmas.

Deschenes was already acquainted with Becker, as her two cats, a male and female, 10 and 12-years-old, are patients of his.

When asked how the cat was adjusting to its new home, Deschenes answered, "She's doing really well. I'm surprised, I didn't think she was going to fit in as well, but she really has." Deschenes said, initially, her other two cats were not very receptive to the newcomer. "They fought a little the first couple of days... but this morning, they were all eating out of the same food dish."

Deschenes said her 18-year-old son named the cat "Magic," "after a basketball player, Magic Johnson," she said. "But, my

son's going away to R.I.T. next fall — so, it's MY cat."


Deschenes said the cat, who is very affectionate, shares her pillow with her at night. "I'm very surprised at this. I have a male cat who follows me everywhere — and he has tolerated that. He usually sleeps in the bed, on the pillow — but he's been letting HER sleep on the pillow."

Asked how the cat was doing, health-wise, Deschenes said, "Well, when I first brought her home, the paw looked like a chicken bone. But, the fur is now starting to grow back and it's starting to look pretty normal. She's not using (the paw) yet, but Dr. Becker said she'd start using it soon. She's doing great."

An empathetic Deschenes said her first thought upon reading *The Enterprise* article was, "The poor little thing." She recalls, "I read it and said, 'Oh, my God.' My heart just ached. I'm such a sucker for animals. I'd have 30 of them if I could."

"She (Magic) is my Christmas present... and she IS a sweetheart!"

When discovered in 1781, the planet Uranus was first named George in honor of King George III of England.



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