

# Wilmington Vote on Old High School, Thursday July 14th

## Presented by Wilmington School Board

**What:** On July 14th, the residents of Wilmington will be asked to approve a ballot question granting the Wilmington School District authority to sell the old Wilmington High School building.

**When:** An Australian Ballot vote will be held on Thursday, July 14th at the Twin Valley Elementary School music room between the hours of 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM. An informational meeting will be held on Thursday, July 7th at 7PM at the Twin Valley Elementary School gymnasium.

**Why:** The Wilmington School Board/Twin Valley School Board is legally required to divest itself of the old school building and intends to sell the building to a private developer. The building requires significant operational cost and management time. This takes away resources from the educational program. For over a century the school has been a focal point of the community and we want this to continue by working with a developer to ensure that public space is available.

**How:** The Wilmington School Board has sent out a request for proposals seeking qualified developers and investors who are willing to take ownership of the building based on several criteria.

As the building has many liabilities it is not expected to earn much more than a token price.

However, the school board also wants the transaction to benefit the town and improve the village of Wilmington. Though the building sale price may be minimal, we are seeking to meet the following conditions from the prospective developer:

- The fields and connecting fair buildings will continue to be available to the school and the town and will be maintained by Twin Valley Schools.
- The fair and fireworks will continue to be held on the playing fields.
- Maintain access/full use of the gymnasium for town and school use through a low cost lease rate from the new owner.
- A competitive lease rate that could accommodate a community center and other related tenants.

The School Board will be judging qualified candidates on the following criteria:

- Candidate with successful history of development projects.
- Developer's vision of the how the building will be used.
- Evidence of financial ability to fund project and an estimated timeline for completion.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the ballot question?

"Shall the voters authorize the Wilmington Board of School Directors to sell the former Twin Valley High School Building, under such terms as they determine to be in the best interest of the Wilmington Town School District?"

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## **What has happened with the building so far?**

The building has undergone two studies. One to determine if the building was viable as an entity to be owned and operated by the Old School Enrichment Center. This study could not find a sustainable business model.

The second study completed by Stevens Engineering investigated if the building could be converted to town offices, a police department and a community center. This study included tearing down the old 1900 wood structure and the possible co-location of the health center at this site. The Steven's study comprehensively addressed all deficiencies with the building and fully restored all mechanical and cosmetic issues with the building interior and exterior for the long term.

## **What is the Old School Enrichment Center?**

OSEC is a non profit entity that was formed to provide space that could function as a community center and be co-located with other tenants to create a town center for health, wellness, recreation and community services.

## **Why isn't the building being considered for municipal ownership?**

A working group comprised of school board and selectboard members was formed to consider this. At this time the selectboard has not expressed an interest in pursuing the building for municipal ownership and has indicated that they believe private ownership is the best path. The construction cost to the town under municipal ownership would be significant and translates to a 5 cent tax on the yearly municipal rate for a period of 25 years. The school board is concerned that transferring ownership to the town would not be a quick process and also believes private ownership is the better path.

## **Will the voters know who the winning bidder is before the vote?**

The deadline for the bidding period is June 24th. We expect to make the selected candidate known to the public at the scheduled informational meeting prior to the vote. Currently we have two bidders who have communicated their intention to bid on the property. Should one of these bidders meet all or most of the criteria the school board has established, they will be selected and further negotiations will continue with that candidate to arrive at a final contract for sale. In the event that there are no bidders or no bidders meeting the basic requirements for sale, the school board will extend the RFP process and more aggressively seek out qualified bidders in order to transfer the building.

## **What is the cost of voting no or doing nothing?**

- The Wilmington and Twin Valley boards are committed to divesting themselves of the building in a responsible way. Voting no on this ballot delays this effort.
- The prospective tenants that have expressed interest in being co-located next to a community center will look elsewhere for space or choose not to locate in the town.
- This lingering issue of the vacated building will further complicate school unionization efforts required under Act 46.
- The Twin Valley Schools will be forced to spend approximately \$120,000 per year to maintain the building.

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