

Chalkboard

By

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It took three special school board meetings, but a site has been picked for the new Primary School. That may seem like a lot of meetings for what might appear to have been a simple decision, but this is a matter that required some serious discussion. When you consider that the building will probably have a life span of 40 to 50 years, a few extra hours becomes inconsequential to the process.

The school board had three basic choices. The first was the “front” or east end of the football practice field between the baseball field and Pioneer Lane. The next was the area due south of the middle school between Pioneer Lane and the back or west portion of the existing bus drive that runs north and south behind the middle and high schools. The third site was on the west side of that same bus drive and situated generally southwest of the middle school. At the third special board meeting, the third site was chosen.

There were several reasons that made the third site the most advantageous. The first was the fact that this site would allow the students to have direct access to their playground without having to cross the pathway of any vehicular traffic. The second was that it allowed for better separation of bus and car traffic. The third was that its location allowed for better car traffic control both off and back onto Pioneer Lane.

Nobody is unaware of how congested traffic can already be on Pioneer Lane during the start and ending of the school day. Nor is anyone blind to what adding another school at that site will add to that mix. Having the Primary School located toward the rear of that site in the same general lie of the bus garage will allow for the building of a new driveway back to the school which will allow cars to be “in line” off Pioneer Lane to load and unload their students. This drive way will connect to the existing bus drive and form a loop reserved for parents of Primary School students. “On paper”, parents of all three schools-Primary, Middle, and High, will have to share Pioneer Lane but each group will have their own driveway and route for loading and unloading their respective students. Additionally, bus traffic will be separated from car traffic while both are on school grounds.

Is there anything that can be done to address traffic flow on Pioneer Lane? That issue is out of the school’s jurisdiction. School officials will make a brief presentation at the next City Planning Committee session on

November 18, 2004, and ask that the City look at the possibility of connecting some of the new streets being built south of the fire station and east of Pioneer Lane- for example, connect South Smith to East Seventh and also connect Smith to what I assume will be the new Eighth Street when it is finished. There would be some obvious advantages and disadvantages to doing this. An advantage would be having a traffic route back to Highway 12 (Third Street) that did not involve the intersection of Highway 12 and Pioneer Lane. At present a vehicle leaving the school site can go towards Dawn Hill on Pioneer Lane and wind back around to Sleepy Hollow. Traffic can turn west off Pioneer Lane onto Swepeco Road and use Jerald Shea and Betty Baker roads to get back to Highway 12 West. Or it can, as most people choose, get back on Highway 12 at the junction of Highway 12 and Pioneer lane.

The disadvantage to connecting up some of the new streets would be having possibly heavy, although periodic, traffic flow through what will no doubt be a residential section of town. This might be a safety issue to homeowners in that area.

Obviously, the school wants to be a “good neighbor” to all the residents of the city. The school has no desire to impose on anyone or to be a nuisance in any way. We had some choices on where to locate the school on school premises but we have little control of city traffic.

In the big picture, traffic may be a problem come fall of 2006 when the new Primary School is scheduled to open. In the bigger picture the problem is one worth having. It means our school, our town, and our community are growing, progressive entities.