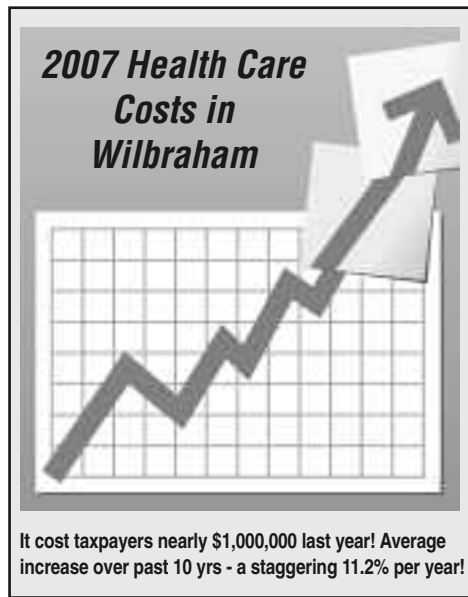


A Public Service Newsletter Dedicated to Keeping the Citizens of Wilbraham Informed About Important Matters.

How On Earth Will We Pay For It?

By Robert L. Page Jr., *Chairman CCW*



Consider this. The promised health insurance coverage for all Commonwealth of Massachusetts retired ex-employees will cost more than the cost of the Big Dig. That is over **14 BILLION Bucks**. Whether you know it or not, Wilbraham is in the same pickle.

In May of 2006 the Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham submitted a petitioned

article, Article #3, to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant asking that the Board of Selectmen investigate, study and report back to the town on the impact of the unfunded future costs for health & life insurance promised to Town employee retirees. It was clear to some of us that there was a huge problem on the horizon and it was growing day by day. We are still waiting for an answer.

We, as a town, are currently using a “pay as you go system.” Picture this: Every time a town employee retires we have to keep paying their health insurance and start paying for the new employee’s health insurance. That goes on for as long as the ex-employee lives. Check out the following history of our Town’s health insurance costs shown later in this article. Over 10 years the cost has nearly tripled.

This is a financial problem that we are going to have to deal
(Continued to Page 6)


Two CCW Directors Participate in Recent MRHS Focus Groups; School Committee Distributes Flyer

(Editor: Earlier this year, the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee retained the services of Ruotolo Associates to develop and produce a multimedia communications program to help assist the school committee in publicizing information about a new or renovated high school. According to their website, Ruotolo is a national full-service fundraising and public relations firm for the non-profit world and was founded in 1979. Ruotolo is headquartered in the greater NYC area with divisions in Washington DC, New England, and Midwest region. They serve a wide range of clients in the fields of education, healthcare, and politics to name a few.

Ruotolo will be paid \$15,000 for their services which includes, among other things, a series of focus groups. They facilitated 6 locally held focus groups in May and in late June, the School Committee distributed a 4-page color flyer insert in the W-H TIMES summarizing their interpretations, along with other information.

In addition, the school committee, with Ruotolo’s assistance, is planning various multimedia communications activities throughout the summer and fall to keep taxpayers informed.

Two CCW directors participated in these focus groups and their comments and opinions appear on page 3. Also, in the opinion of the CCW board of directors, many statements in the above mentioned flyer are misleading, and their rebuttal was published recently in Wilbraham-Hampden TIMES. That response is reprinted on page 7).



A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitudes and perceptions towards a product, service, concept, ad, or idea. Various questions are asked by a trained moderator in an interactive group setting (about 8-10 people) where participants are free to talk with other group members. Results are not statistically projectable, but help assist the sponsor to better understand issues and target them accordingly.

(Continued to Page 3)

TEACHER UNIONS

By Royce Layman, *past CCW Director, and Retired Superintendent of Adams-Cheshire Regional School District*

Let it be known that teacher unions are the most powerful labor force in the country today. The National Education Association (NEA) unified with each state association; i.e., NEA/MTA, such as Massachusetts Teachers Association, and (AFT) American Federation of Teachers wield more power over our culture than one could imagine.

Years ago, before collective bargaining law, state and local teacher professional associations provided support and resources for the profession. Sometime in the 1960s the NEA decided that if a teacher wanted to belong to either the national or state association, he/she had to join both as a unified force. That is when the power politics began and NEA/MTA became a union. Since that time, the coercion and leverage has grown exponentially, and today the unions are a culture-shaping mega force.

By culture shaping, one has to understand the domination, dictation and power-shaping ability this group possesses. When a teacher contracts for a position in the public schools, there is serious expectation that he/she joins the union, the benefit being representation at the bargaining table and liability insurance against suit. Very few teachers dare cross this line and choose not to join. And from this membership one is expected to tow the line; i.e., vote accordingly, teach accepted practices and support the effort in all regards. This is primarily how politically correct practices and policies have been accomplished throughout the nation. One might call this brainwashing. Another more significant problem is that it is virtually impossible to fire a teacher because of this union protection. Therefore the schools have many poor or bad teachers teaching our children which are no wonder our educational standards are eroding. If we are ever able to improve our schooling we must rid our schools of this union domination.

Looking at this from the side of the taxpayer, one can begin to understand the power and domination the teacher union has over the local budget. Quite often the teaching force is the largest employer in the community, and with their desire to maintain step raises and acquire a percentage raise, it quite often falls outside the ability of the community to pay and continue operating expenses in balance with fiscal restraints.

The only option to being heard as a taxpayer is to elect a School Committee member who will hold the line in negotiation and not agree to add monies to the local budget when they are out of line with fiscal responsibility. The only other alternative is to urge the development of charter schools, alternative or home schooling, or private schools where unions are not present.

SEWER UPDATE

By Zigmond Pabich, *CCW Board Member*

What is 25,000 feet long, with 2 pumps, and more than 80 manholes? You're right! It's the Wilbraham Main Street Sewer Expansion.

In a May meeting with Ed Miga and Tanya Basch of the Wilbraham Engineering Department, they reported that the project, which was approved at the May Town Meeting of 2007, is progressing smoothly. The system design engineer, Weston & Sampson, completed the final plans and the project has been approved by the Massachusetts State DEP Department.

A number of construction companies bid on the project. Bids ranged from \$3,600,000 to \$6,000,000. After careful scrutiny the contract was

awarded to Albanese D & S Construction from Dracut, Massachusetts. Construction started in June 2008 and will continue through the summer when ground water levels tend to be lower. Barring any unforeseen complications, the project could be completed in 9 working months.

This project will allow more than 250 individuals (including residents, schools, town buildings etc.) to tie into the sewer system and resolve a number of serious septic system failures along the route.

Based on the water use of all adjacent properties, Ed indicated that the cost of installation would be shared as a "Betterment" and "Privilege" Fee. Minnechaug Regional High School is projected to be the second largest user and their Privilege Fee will be based on 129 EDU's. One EDU represents the water use for a single dwelling. Wilbraham Monson Academy is the largest user.

Because the two schools are major participants in the project, the DEP approved the project quickly and supported a 2.1% bond rate for the project. The construction bid of \$3,700,000 is less than anticipated. Both MRHS and Wilbraham Academy agreed to allow a pumping station on their properties which cleared the



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Eagle Eye News is a bi-monthly public service newsletter published by Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham, a taxpayer watchdog group dedicated to keeping Wilbraham citizens informed about important matters. Articles may be submitted for consideration, but are printed at the sole discretion of the editor and may be edited if too long. All submissions must be signed by the author.

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Two CCW Directors Participate in MRHS Focus Groups; Comment on Recent School Committee Flyer

from Page 1

*By Matt Villamaino, CCW Board Member
and Editor of Eagle Eye News*

I attended a one hour focus group on May 6. There were 14 of us in the meeting, and it appeared to be a pretty good cross section of people: men/women, different age brackets, and residents from both towns. According to the invitation, the objective of the meeting was two-fold: *“To help develop messages that communicate the facts and needs [about a new or renovated high school] and to identify ways to most effectively deliver these messages to parents, children, business owners, and all citizens of both towns”*.

The facilitator/moderator from Ruotolo Associates, Cathi Coridan, was both professional and friendly. The meeting started with each person identifying themselves with a brief bio. The first question that Cathi asked us had to do with our opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of both towns. This went on for 20 minutes - FYI, you couldn't help but notice a big clock on the wall. To me too much time was spent on this subject. As one would expect, all remarks were warm, fuzzy, feel good comments ... sort of as American as motherhood and apple pie: great place to raise a family, great school system, lots of volunteerism and pride, quiet town, strong tax base, etc. It was overkill.

When discussion turned to what should the message include, I said many taxpayers wanted to know what the financial impact would be, and how much is it going to cost them. Cathi responded that we weren't going to discuss “dollars and cents” as the MSBA hasn't made a decision yet and we just don't know. And while this was important, she said we're running out of time and need to get something out to people quickly.

It was confusing to me how Ruotolo and the school committee can effectively develop, create and disseminate complete multimedia programs when the decision to build a new high school or renovate the current one hasn't been decided by the MSBA. It's like mapping out vacation plans before you know where you're going...or putting the cart in front of the horse.

I also suggested that any item not subject to state reimbursement, be separated from the primary school proposal to build or renovate. Non-reimbursable items should be voted on as a separate override. This would include items like the olympic size swimming pool and superintendent's offices that were part of the original Dore and Whittier report. Let the taxpayers vote this up or down without it's effect on the primary proposal.

A question was asked during the meeting, are there people in town against this project? While I'm not sure if this was directed at CCW, I responded that I knew of no one in town who is against investing tens-of-millions of dollars in Minnechaug. We are not going to close Minnechaug. People just want to know

(Continued to Page 5)

*By Matthew Phillip Metzler,
CCW Board Member*

I must emphasize the fact that the thoughts which I am going to share with you are my impressions of a recent focus group with Cathi Coridan of Ruotolo Associates. The meeting was held in the superintendent's offices and lasted about 60 minutes. To say the least, I was perplexed to realize that I was the only participant in this focus group. Why, I don't know.

To me, the facilitator did not seem to feel that a new Minnechaug would have much of a financial impact on our small community. She did seem concerned that a new pool and a new superintendent's offices would not be included in the cost of a new building. She shied away from the fact that there has been no accountability for the maintenance of the current building. She stressed, “let's move on”.

I was surprised that she felt that a renovation project was not an option. She said, and I quote, *“Extensive renovations will be wall-to-wall and the school will be shut down for four years”*.

She asked me to highlight what I felt were the top areas of concern that were listed on a Facility Study Report. I told her I could not do this because I felt it was a propaganda sheet. She was flabbergasted.

I was dumbfounded when she said that the cost of any major renovations would be almost equal to new school construction. At the end of our dialogue I gave her a copy of Plan B which was engineered by the Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham. This Plan B would involve a fraction of the cost of new construction or massive renovations. She wasn't aware of Plan B and never heard of CCW.

After spending 35 years in the field of education, it was amusing to read the educational jargon in this recent MRHS Project flyer. Educators are quick to pick up on various thoughts in the social stream. They hop on the bandwagon and attempt to assimilate these thoughts into social, philosophical, and educational scheme of things. I wonder what went through the mind of the average citizen in Wilbraham and Hampden when they read, *“...the building does not conform to a technological infrastructure...”*? I recall the terms non-gradedness, open

“After spending 35 years in the field of education, it was amusing to read the jargon in this recent MRHS Project flyer”

***Matthew Phillip Metzler,
Member of Board of Directors,
Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham***

(Continued to Page 8)

Towns Need To Start Operating Like The Businesses They Are

Reprinted with permission by Managing Editor David Tranchida (c) The Westerly Sun 04/09/2008

Ahh, Spring shoots are sprouting up from the bulbs and taxpayers are preparing to dig deep to pay a tax bill that goes up annually.

We are talking about Westerly here, where budget talks started a few months ago with the aim of keeping a lid on spending. And to their credit, the Finance Board, Town Council and School Board did just that.

No new trucks, no new services, no new positions — fewer positions in the schools in fact.

But somehow the budget is going up 3.6 percent or \$2.7 million more than the current budget. The total proposed spending for fiscal year 2008-09 is \$77.15 million.

So, how is it that Westerly taxpayers will pay more while getting the same or less in return?

Well, 73 percent of the budget is comprised of salaries and benefits. That means the council and school board have control over 27 percent of the budget.

More accurately, they have control over 27 percent of the budget at this time of year.

They can serve their constituents much better if they dig deep within themselves every few years and confront the 73 percent of the budget when they actually have the chance to address it: during contract talks with teachers and unionized municipal employees.

For more than a decade, businesses have been forced to ask employees to share more of the cost of employee health care and pension benefits because of rising costs.

They have done this largely so they can ensure that employees

will continue to have a place to work. Health care insurance companies are dictating how business is done by forcing these changes through annual premium increases. And regulations regarding pension laws have forced businesses to shift retirement benefit liability to employees through 401K and similar programs since funding defined benefit plans can threaten the very existence of some companies.

Yet local municipal employees — union and non-union alike — continue to enjoy quality health care benefits and defined pension benefit plans at minimal cost to them — a formula rare in the private sector simply because they are no longer affordable.

Companies have made such changes because there are variables in business that at times make revenue unpredictable against ever rising costs. If business in their sector falls off they have less money coming in. Town and state governments simply go to the well of taxpayers when more money is needed. Business does not have that crutch. Prudent control of expenses is part of doing business in the private sector; it's not an option. It should be the same for state and town government.

In their effort to tighten the belt the way private communities have already done, Westerly councilors have asked non-union administrative staff to pay 12 percent of their health care premiums, up from 10 percent. For the 45 or so people affected, this amounts to \$13,336. It's a step in the right direction, but a baby step at best. The council had considered revising the plan further so employees paid more for prescriptions and co-pays, but they felt it wouldn't be fair to make both adjustments in the same year. We like the concept of fairness in budget talks. Now what about a bit of fairness for taxpayers?



Have a Safe, Happy and Healthy Summer!

**See You at Next Meeting September 18
7:00 pm • Wilbraham Middle School**

Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham
www.ConcernedCitizensOfWilbraham.org

Focus Group - Matt Villamaino from Page 3

what's it going to cost them. No one in the meeting was against the MRHS project.

At one point we were handed a copy of a Report of the Minnechaug Facility Study Committee - Executive Summary that listed nine principle reasons why the authors recommended a new facility be built. We were given a few minutes to digest this multipage report, and were then asked to circle the top 3 items we felt were most important: ie, security/safety systems, poor floor plans, heating/AC/plumbing/electrical issues, roof issues, etc. How can one make an intelligent decision on the spot, when so many issues are complicated, intertwined, state mandated, etc. You can't. These were simply emotional responses by participants without regard to this or budgets.

In quickly glancing at this report, I was bothered by a lead sentence that said, "*No one is really to blame for this rather stark collections of shortcomings [of MRHS]*". I was upset with this and told the group that this statement is wrong and there must be future accountability. Over the years, the many superintendents, school committees, and principals were irresponsible in their stewardship of Minnechaug as money was budgeted and approved by the town for maintenance, but spent elsewhere by school committees. They have the final authority on how to spend the money. This became a contentious point as some did not agree with my comments.

Schedule of Upcoming Meetings

Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham at Wilbraham Middle School, Thursday

- July 2008, Summer Break - No Meeting
- Aug. 2008, Summer Break - No Meeting
- September 18, 2008, 7:00 pm

Board of Selectmen at Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room, Monday

- July 7, 2008, 7:00 pm
- July 21, 2008, 7:00 pm
- August 4, 2008, 7:00 pm
- August 18, 2008, 7:00 pm

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee, Tuesday

- July 29, 2008, 7:00 pm Minnechaug Conference Room
- Aug. 2008, Summer Break - No Meeting

Get Involved - Your Opinion Matters

With respect to the second objective of the focus group....what is the best way to get this message out, we simply ran out of time. Only a few minutes were spent on this: do direct mail, hold meetings, put in newspapers etc. People were invited to email/contact Cathi afterwards if they had other ideas. I did.

As the meeting concluded, the next focus group was coming in - a group of students! Go figure that one. Future taxpayers?

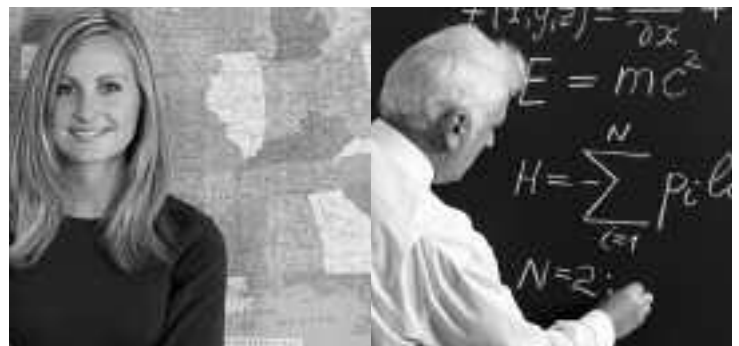
In conclusion, I have mixed feelings about this meeting. While I don't think we needed to spend taxpayer's money to conduct focus groups, let alone develop a communications program by an outside fundraising/PR firm, I think it was good to get people together to voice opinions. I think the school committee should have waited until the MSBA makes its decision, so the focus group questions could have been more focused...no pun intended! Yes, I know timing is tight, but gathering the correct information is vital. They missed the boat, at least in this meeting, by not addressing the financial impact on taxpayers.

With respect to the flyer, I was glad they didn't spend a fortune on glitzy production and printing, but I was disappointed with it overall. There really wasn't anything new in it. The quality of the writing, design and content was fair at best. Many of the points were simply a rehash of previously made statements and some were just misleading. (See CCW Board of Directors' rebuttal on page 7). In fact with many of the statements like "*world class education*", "*21st century*", "*continues to change at increasing speed*", "*what worked before is no longer sufficient*"...just ask yourself: do these statements sound like something a "*consensus opinion*" of 56 focus group participants would say? Or were they mostly facilitator-led, biased interpretations? Right on! They all sound nice, but I'm not sure what it all means and the cost associated with it. This flyer clearly promotes building a new high school *and that decision hasn't even been made by the MSBA!*

We all want what's best for our children. And we all want to continue to maintain the excellent educational standards at MRHS. But we want it to be realistic, without unfairly burdening taxpayers in Wilbraham and Hampden for the next 25 years.

A lot of people have worked long and hard on this project. While we don't agree with a number of their conclusions, we appreciate their efforts and look forward to finding a solution that will benefit all in our community.

Bricks and mortar have never been the foundation for an excellent education. First and foremost are dedicated teachers with a quality curriculum. Odd this wasn't mentioned in the flyer?



How Will We Pay For It? from Page 1

with. The answer is something that no one seems to want to talk or think about. We must change the way we keep promising benefits to new municipal employees and school employees.

The businesses throughout America have acknowledged this dilemma and have been dealing with it for the past 8 to 10 years. We must consider the consequences with great care. Maybe Medicare is the answer. Maybe a greater co-payment is the answer. Maybe a two tier employee health insurance program. We had better start working on an answer to the problem.

One thing I do know is that we have to start standing up to the Unions. Unions are a good thing. But we can't allow them to bankrupt our communities or dictate terms to us. (See related article *Teacher Unions* on page 2). I have heard it said over and over again: We must bargain in good faith. Just exactly what does that mean? Does that also apply to the unions we negotiate with? Is the argument that we do not spend money that we don't have too complicated to understand. Business all over the United States have been tackling this dilemma for the past 8 to 10 years.

Fiscal Year	Health Care Cost	Dollar Increase	Percent Growth
1998	\$351,855	\$16,692	5%
1999	\$396,206	\$44,405	13%
2000	\$414,245	\$17,985	5%
2001	\$503,394	\$89,149	22%
2002	\$574,722	\$71,328	14%
2003	\$667,416	\$92,694	16%
2004	\$698,216	\$30,800	5%
2005	\$778,156	\$79,940	11%
2006	\$892,136	\$113,980	15%
2007	\$961,699	\$69,563	8%
AVE ANNUAL INCREASE			11.2%

The Federal Government has mandated that we, Wilbraham, must determine just how much that unfunded liability is by the end of this year. The law also says that we don't have to do anything about it. But know this: the longer we wait the bigger it gets. I can hardly wait for the answer. It's going to be breathtaking.



Please feel free to invite your neighbors and friends to our next CCW Meeting. It's open to everyone and we encourage comments and feedback of all kind!

Next meeting Sept. 18 • 7:00 pm • Wilbraham Middle School • Have a nice summer!

A History Lesson

By Barbara Anderson, Executive Director Citizens for Limited Taxation - Reprinted with the Permission Boston Globe 5/5/08

A quick retrospective for those who weren't Massachusetts taxpayers before the Great Tax Revolt in 1980:

There was no control on property taxes, so they ranged from highest to third highest in the world, year to year. The local public employee unions, other spending interests, and people who could easily afford higher taxes packed town meetings or intimidated city councils.

Incredibly, the educational establishment had a thing called "school committee fiscal autonomy." This meant that the school committee had to be given whatever budget it demanded, unless the town went to court, where it usually lost. When taxpayers complained at a school committee meeting, they were ignored.

So they rebelled by passing Proposition 2 ½, which limited property taxes AND repealed "school committee fiscal autonomy." Local managers, able to finally get some control over school budgets, looked there first for savings. So when you hear that "education was devastated by Prop 2 ½," it was merely treated, for the first time, like other town departments. Even today, per pupil expenditures are among the highest in the nation.

You will also hear that "overrides are a legitimate part of Proposition 2 ½." Well, yes, in that we created an override provision as a safety net to cover emergencies and other unanticipated expenses, like a court judgment. Voters were so angry in 1980 that it never occurred to us that they would vote to raise their taxes to pay for operating expenses, including employee pay raises and benefits that exceed their own.

Property taxes and the total per capita tax burden are still far above the national average in Massachusetts. But at least taxpayers have some control, and are generally treated more politely by school committees that might want their override vote. It's only when an override fails that they hear they selfishly don't care about either education or "the children;" and for override advocates, more is never enough.

This year, forced to recognize that some people can't afford to pay more, override proponents are stating their sympathy before arguing for the override anyhow. Clearly they don't care that a tax increase is a pay cut for people on fixed incomes, or who are unemployed; sometimes they suggest that such people might want to live somewhere else that is more affordable for them. At a Marblehead Town Meeting several years ago, a woman responded to a senior citizen's concern that "if you can't afford this, perhaps you aren't managing your portfolio properly." Perhaps.

After hearing about "the suffering children in Wellesley"

(Continued to Page 8)

(Editor: Recently the HWHS inserted a 4-page color flyer in the Wilbraham-Hampden TIMES. It's the opinion of the CCW Board of Directors, that the flyer contains misleading information. Their Letter to the Editor was printed on 7/10/08 and appears below)

THE MINNECHAUG PROJECT FLYER

The Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham (CCW) remain committed to improve the facility of Minnechaug Regional High School (MRHS). We believe that to do so will require tens of millions of dollars. At the same time, we feel the need to offer insight and comment on some misleading information in the colorful flyer distributed in the June 26, 2008 issue of the Wilbraham-Hampden Times.

Page #1- Flyer Focus

The quote on the first page sets the direction for what follows. Deb Moore offers "...my take on education". Deborah P. Moore is the Executive Editor /Publisher for a Dayton, OH magazine called "School Planning & Management". This trade magazine is an informational resource for construction, facilities, business, and technology professionals serving the K-12 education market. Since her message sets the tone for some major changes, what are her credentials? Does she have Ph.D. in Education? Is "her take" as good as our take?

Page #2 - Current Status

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has *not* as of this date issued any approval of funds for the Minnechaug Project. There is nothing to "finalize". Our Community is providing input to the MSBA clarifying our request. In another newspaper article a few weeks ago, the Superintendent indicated that we should hear from the State with their proposed involvement with the Minnechaug Project in early 2009.

Page #2 - Decision Making Process

There is very little negotiation taking place here. The MSBA will tell the HWRSB what *they* plan to do and spend in support of that plan. Options include a new school, renovation of the existing building, or nothing. It then becomes the voters of Wilbraham and Hampden to accept or reject the MSBA proposal. "Fair and equitable to the budget" is in the eye of the beholder. MSBA has infinitely more say in the cost and breakdown of the proposal.

Page #2 - Focus Group Input

Six individual focus groups with a total of 56 individuals from both towns were held a few weeks ago. Keeping in mind that the experts say the results of limited size focus groups are not statistically projectable, it's hard to develop any real town consensus from this information. In the minds of the two CCW Directors who attended separate groups, these statements were mostly made by the facilitator of the groups. With more than 92% of Minnechaug graduates going on to college, we have a first class educational system. Let's leave "World Class" to the colleges and universities they attend.

Page #3 - School Building

Pictures shown on the flyer were taken from the December 21, 2004 Dore and Whittier Feasibility Study. Reading this section doesn't reflect the full condition of the facility. It highlights the areas requiring maintenance and was originally used as a sales pitch for a new school. We suggest it doesn't represent the overall condition of the school or corrective measures taken since that study was prepared over 3 years ago.



For a copy of this Flyer, contact CCW

Page #4 - What People are Saying

The flyer clearly states that over the last 30 years, few capital improvements have been made. It now states that "few people realize" the shape of the school. At the same time "some" express a concern for future costs. We suggest that *most people* express a concern for the future cost, and how we got to this point. *Few people* feel a new school is the best option.

Minnechaug Regional High School has been and will continue to be a top ranked public secondary school in the state. Besides the stellar performance of its graduates, this is borne out by the results of the School Choice Program. Residents of Hampden and Wilbraham are not removing their children and sending them to other local public schools. In fact, nearly 100 of the approximately 1400 Minnechaug students are from neighboring communities, and many others have moved to Wilbraham because of the quality educational opportunity we provide. When assessing the opportunity offered, this seems especially relevant.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that the flyer was not publicly authored. Why was it published anonymously? Is this a sign of the accuracy of the information, the support of the relevant groups, or the competence of the School Committee's professional public relations group, Ruotolo Associates, to whom taxpayers paid \$15,000?

Prepared by members of the
Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham Board of Directors



The MSBA will unilaterally determine whether to provide funding for an all new MRHS, or renovations to the existing building. Taxpayers in Wilbraham and Hampden must then decide to accept or reject their offer within 120 days.

Interesting Statistics About Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District **

Students in Our Schools (FY 2007)
3785

Total School Budget (FY 2007)
\$35,136,727

Budget Dollars Per Student (FY 2007)
\$9,283

Number of Schools in District
8

Annual Transportation Budget
Per Student (FY2007)
\$403

Total Teachers in School District (FY 2007)
244.9

Total Full Time School District
Employees (FY 2007)
457.5

Teacher to Student Ratio (FY 2006)
15.9 to 1

Employee to Student Ratio (FY 2006)
8.25 to 1

Average Annual District Teachers
Contract Income (FY 2007)
\$56,242

Percent of Wilbraham Budget for
School District (FY 2006)
61.93 %

Population of Wilbraham (FY 2006)
14,795

Elected School Committee Members
7

** The information supplied on this page is derived from documents provided by the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District budget and line item printout for FY 2006

Prepared by Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham

Sewer Update from Page 2

way for quicker progress and avoided possible cost increases.

Individuals on the extension should be charged their "Betterment" or "Privilege" Fee in the Fall of 2009. With so many favorable circumstances, the final figures should be somewhat less than the projected \$11,000 per EDU. Good job Engineering Department!

Individual user may tie into the system when certain parts of the project are completed. In some cases this may be well before the end of the total installation.

This project represents more than 5 years of planning by our town Engineering Department. Everyone involved should be congratulated for their vision and perseverance. This new addition not only solves many existing concerns but also lays a foundation for future expansion in adjoining areas.

Focus Group - Matthew Metzler from Page 3

classroom, team teaching, flexible units, modular planning, etc. And lest we forget the infamous "modern math"!

Talk to a teacher who has worked, or attempted to work, in an open, flexible classroom situation, and they will relate how it was nothing short of chaos. Remember when computers would take the place of teachers? Ad infinitum.

What is the purpose of a high school? I submit to you that the purpose of a high school is to give students the skills to prepare them to enter various professional fields. The goal of a high school is not to be a pre-medical, pre-engineering, or pre-anything facility. The purpose of a high school is to make it a student proficient in reading, writing, and arithmetic!

To me it is amazing that our schools of higher education --- Harvard, Yale, Columbia to name a few --- are still educating students for the 21st century in buildings that are 200 years old, and professors that are almost ☺☺☺☺☺!

As I have said in the past - teachers teach, buildings do not. Thus I would argue that it is not necessary to have a *world class* and *state-of-the-art* facility. Let us leave that to Big Y.

A History Lesson from Page 6

shortly after Prop 2 ½ passed, I tuned out on the tales of woe. But now it's clear that serious problems do lie ahead for Massachusetts cities and towns if they don't get control over public employee benefits and special education costs. State laws must be changed, unions must be confronted, reforms must be made. Voters who allow overrides stand in the way of necessary change – and of Governor Patrick's campaign promise for "property tax relief."

Tell Us What You Think?

We'd love to hear what you think about our newsletter and website. There's a lot of important issues coming up this year and we want to make sure we communicate them to you. If you have any comments or suggestions, call Bob Page 596-8719 or email us: Editor@ConcernedCitizensofWilbraham.com