

SYNOPSIS
URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUSINESS MEETING
NOVEMBER 7, 2006

The Campus Land Use Plan was the focus for most of the discussion at Tuesday's board meeting. That plan is a long-range (20-30 years in the future) property acquisition and space development strategy for the "super block" that encompasses Urbana Middle and High Schools.

Created in the spring of 2003, generally the plan calls for the school district to eventually own the properties on Iowa facing the high school, on Washington that back up to the Iowa properties, and in the 900 block of South Race. What is now the parking lot off Washington would move to the west where the residential properties are. Green space for athletics, outdoor classrooms, and physical education would some day be created where the parking lot is now.

The school district held a neighborhood meeting in June 2004 to seek their input on the plan. There was a lot of discussion at that time about de-institutionalizing the appearance of the campus and student parking issues. The school district has never formally adopted the plan though and several board members feel the time has come to do so.

City of Urbana Community Development Director Libby Tyler said that as far as zoning issues and allowable uses are concerned, by law a school district is permitted to use its space for educational purposes, so any expansion issues are probably not going to interfere with the city's comprehensive plan for the area.

Board member John Dimit and other soccer parents would like to see what is now the staff parking lot off Washington become the official UHS soccer competition playfield. He said it makes far more sense to move parking to the west where trees now stand. He, like several other board members, do not want to remove trees in the expansion process and it's more practical to leave trees in a parking area, and impossible to have them in an athletic playing area.

Of greater concern to the board though is that neighbors on Iowa, Race, and Washington are guaranteed that the school district will not resort to "imminent domain" to purchase any of those properties. Imminent domain allows a public body to initiate legal action to overtake a property based upon fair market values. Board members don't want animosity that normally accompanies imminent domain and they want property owners to know that if they want to sell their property at some point in the future, the district will be the likely buyer.

There are concerns from the middle school and high school administration about eventual use of the green space, mainly because the proposed changes of additional student supervision and safety concerns are problematic for staff.

The board has asked that formal adoption of the plan be placed on the November 21 business meeting agenda.

In other business, petitions are available at the superintendent's office for school board elections next April. There are four subdistrict seats up in 2007 – board president Joyce Hudson, vice president John Dimit, member Benita Rollins-Gay and member Mark Netter. The deadline for filing is in January.

Also, the latest update on the Aquatic Center is that the Pool Pak will ship December 14. Installation is expected the week of December 18-22. It should take a total of 2-3 weeks to install and test all the systems before the center can reopen.