

School board dispels rumors

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The Portsmouth City School Board is attempting to dispel rumors that it has plans to allow sub-standard housing on the property of two school buildings scheduled for demolition.

According to the board, reports have been circulating that trailers or housing systems similar to those in Wayne Hills would be located on the sites. Board officials say that just isn't true.

Currently, both McKinley and Roosevelt schools are zoned Residential A, and the board is attempting to have them rezoned Residential C.

"Residential A limits the land to single-family dwellings, while Residential C allows more flexibility and the possibility of facilities like mid-range to high-end condominiums," said Jan Broughton, Superintendent. "Our board attorney, Don Scriven of Scott, Scriven and Wahoff has worked closely with Johnson and Oliver, our site acquisition attorneys, to make sure we are working within the Ohio Revised Code and that we are able to set parameters that attract the kind of facilities that will enhance the neighborhoods."

Broughton said the board has to put the properties up for auction, but the board has the right to set the parameters for the bids high and they have the right of refusal.

She said that the board can assure neighbors of those sites that whatever would go on that ground would not de-value the neighborhood.

"Our goal is to leave the sites to where they wouldn't take any value away from the property nearby," Broughton said. "The board is not in the business of selling property, we want to boost the economy and leave a legacy."

The board also is governed as to how it can utilize the money received from the sales.

"We have to use them for capital needs and improvements," said Ralph Applegate, director of new facilities.

In a memo to school officials, Broughton said, "We will not allow sub-standard dwellings to be built on any of these sites. Our community deserves the best and that is exactly what we will strive to accomplish."

The school board's request is on the agenda for the June 20 meeting of the City Zoning board scheduled for 1 p.m. and that also will be the opportunity for the zoning board to listen to residents of those areas.

The McKinley site demolition has an early finish date of May 2007 while the early finish date for Roosevelt school is December 2006. The board has not yet requested a zoning change for the Portsmouth High School property.