

MHS Renovation Status – What’s Changed?

by Rebecca Froehlich

It’s been a year, and the students of Madison are learning in the same building. Is it safe? Is it giving full advantage to students of all walks of life? Those questions could be answered with affirmation, depending on the results of November 8th. But this year’s vote for the school renovation is much different than last year.

The prominent idea of all of the changes is downsizing. The renovation will be all new square footage added on, with the original floor space remodeled. “We’re shrinking size, but retaining quality,” says Mrs. Knowlton, who has organized tours and presented new ideas publicly for both the 2010 and 2011 attempts. Some ideas were cut out of convenience. The auto shop, before one of the most expensive renovations, was downsized because of Mr. Lindsay’s recent retirement. One of the areas of largest interest, the gym, will retain the original idea of added square footage, and the locker rooms will take the downsizing effect. The office space, family and consumer science rooms, as well as the once-ambitious library will be cut considerably, but “Everything will still be wonderful,” Mrs. Knowlton reassures. One unique adjustment comes from the idea to add a large practice room to the second floor of the band and chorus room. Instead of it being separated into smaller, sound-proofed spaces, it will be one open space. Donations from citizens of Madison can make up for some of these adjustments. “We have done away with some of the aesthetic luxuries,” admits Mrs. Knowlton, referring to the cut idea of an atrium in senior hallway. The remaining improvements are still copious and necessary, legally and practically. “We are at a critical stage in too many areas,” Mrs. Knowlton says. She refers to the incoming students in the next year with severe disabilities and handicaps that this school cannot presently accommodate. Even now, the school’s disability and safety requirements are not acceptable under state law. The pressure is clearly mounting.

However, those in favor of the renovation have reasons be more optimistic. Mrs. Knowlton highlighted several reasons that the vote for the renovation is more likely to pass this year than last year. The vote was split 1067 in favor and 1063 against last year, reasonably close to the 60-40 vote that was needed. Voting day in 2010 occurred on a snow day with a mere 22% turnout. The weather can’t be controlled, but other factors that caused the disappointing lack of community involvement have been addressed. “We had a lot of ‘golly-gees’,” Mrs. Knowlton says, “As in, they believed we need this new school, but golly gee, \$200 more in was just too much for them at the time. We’ve addressed this by lowering the tax for those with a property worth \$100,000 or more to \$63-\$65.” She feels that the cost in taxes was one of the most prominent factors in negative votes. The new idea of diversified funding will alleviate more demand on individual taxpayers as well. “Many initially understood our problems and needs, and were concerned about them,” she believes. Supporters hope that members of the public are more likely to react in favor after seeing their own needs have been accommodated. What’s the biggest obstacle standing in the way of this renovation proposal passing? “Some people will just be a ‘no’ vote no matter what,” Mrs. Knowlton says. She believes that the balance of votes will shift in favor if the new idea for the project, voting date and how the taxpayers’ situation could improve is publicized.

The polls are open from 7:00 AM-7:00 PM on Tuesday, November 8th. As students and citizens, you are encouraged to voice your opinion and take advantage of voting privileges.