

LICKING HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS

6539 Summit Rd. SW, Pataskala, OH 43062

p. (740) 927-6926 | f. (740) 927-9043

RE: High School Building Project Commences

November 1, 2018

Dear Families:

Our Oct. 31 deadline to commence our high school building project has passed and our project has been on hold since Sept. 11 when the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) denied the issuance of the district's conditional use permit. Now that our deadline has passed with no settlement agreement in sight, the school district was left with a decision about how to move forward.

If you refer to my Oct. 29 communication to families, I shared that some of us attended a nearly four-hour City Council Meeting and, in the end, the Council did not vote upon our settlement agreement and no follow up meeting date regarding the LH matter was scheduled. Therefore, the LH Board needed to make a decision about how to move forward with the project and to try and salvage the construction schedule that is now over two months behind due to the BZA's actions denying our permit (the first BZA Hearing was Aug. 14, 2018).

Although it was initially expected we would have reached a settlement with the City of Pataskala, we deployed an alternate strategy to move the building project forward. Therefore, on Tues., the LH Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution to proceed forward with the construction of our new high school without a conditional use permit. As we have made a "reasonable attempt" to comply with local zoning restrictions, our district has the ability to commence the construction project based upon the court case *Brownfield v. State* (1980,) which still applies today (if you are interested, attached is a legal brief that provides more details).

As I had previously written, the Oct. 31 deadline was a real date for the school district to allow enough time to build and open the building by Aug., 2020 and not incur significant cost increases due to a delay. Moreover, if the project did not begin immediately, the district would incur substantial cost increases (of at least \$58,000), meaning the footprint of the new high school may be reduced to pay for such cost overruns. This would result in a significant reduction in the square footage of our building, which restricts our ability to accommodate our rapidly growing student population.

Therefore, I am pleased to report that the new high school project will commence and contractors are being secured to begin work on the site. Due to weather conditions, you will see activity starting next week. The following is a projected timeline for such work:

- Install the construction entrance and lay down area off of Summit Road (11/5)
- Mobilize equipment (11/5)
- Install perimeter silt fence (11/6)
- Begin stripping topsoil (11/7)
- Begin bulk dirt work, constructing the building pad and parking lots (11/8)

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On behalf of the school district, I want to underscore that the Pataskala City Administration and City Council leadership have been professional and cooperative. Unfortunately, due to the actions of the BZA we had a disagreement; however, moving forward, I do think it is imperative to note our sincere desire to work cooperatively with the City of Pataskala, as enhancing our school district also serves to enrich our community. While the process thus far has experienced many challenges, I am confident we can put this behind us as we look forward. Finally, I want to thank our families and the community for their patience, trust and ongoing support as we navigated recent challenges.

Sincerely,



Philip H. Wagner, Ph.D.
Superintendent