

LC supporters remain optimistic

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LANSDALE -- Supporters of Lansdale Catholic High School say they are cautiously optimistic that the school will not move to Hilltown.

Bridget Algeo, speaking on behalf of the Friends and Supporters of Lansdale Catholic, gave an update to borough council Wednesday night.

Algeo said she is one of many who support the maintenance, renovation, and expansion of Lansdale Catholic.

"We feel the same way you feel about revitalizing Lansdale," Algeo said. "We think we can blend the history of a tradition of excellence with the modernization of the facility to adapt to the educational needs of our students."

Algeo pointed out that although a majority of the student population comes from Lansdale, the school serves students from Quakertown, Schwenksville, Horsham, Norristown and Upper Dublin.

Algeo said the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is continuing to review the surveys submitted by parents between Aug. 11 and 28.

"If they receive a high percentage of 'yes' votes, it is likely a school will be built in Hilltown," Algeo said. "We regret the survey failed to represent an option for expansion."

She said supporters remain optimistic that Cardinal Rigali and the Board of Catholic Education will conclude that a modernization and expansion of the school will best serve the students of the area.

"The point to impress is that they don't perceive this as the best interest for Lansdale," Algeo said. "We think this is a great place and we want to continue to welcome students from our neighboring communities." Algeo said it comes down to the issue of sentiment.

"The sentiment toward LC is justified," she said. "We believe it is stronger than that."

Algeo provided a packet to council members on data and statistics regarding Lansdale Catholic.

The packet had a cover page with a graphic of the names of the communities where students live who attend Lansdale Catholic.

Below the graphic was the sentence: Lansdale Catholic, Not Only a Jewel in the Borough's Crown. . . But a Gem in the Collection of the Area's Fine Catholic Schools.

The packet included other statistics:

- The greatest percentage attending LC are students from the immediate Lansdale area:

- Students from 34 parishes attend LC, and are provided state-mandated transportation by the districts of Norristown, Colonial, Methacton, North Penn, Perkiomen Valley,

Central Bucks, Souderton, Pennridge, Upper Dublin, Hatboro-Horsham, Wissahickon, and Upper Moreland;

- If the building is not located within a 10 mile distance, then the non public pupil is not eligible for transportation, nor are his or her parents eligible for payment toward transportation costs;

- If the school is moved to Hilltown, then students living in Lower Gwynedd, Norristown, Whitpain, Horsham, Upper Dublin, Skippack, Worcester, and Upper Merion would be affected by transportation eligibility;

- The Upper Bucks districts account for about 15 percent of the LC student population, with weak student enrollment increases by 2016;

- Catholic elementary schools surrounding Bishop Shanahan High School in Downingtown sported a 38 percent increase in enrollment between 1990 and 2000;

- An Aug. 25 radio interview with Archdiocese planning committee member Joanne McHugh failed to factor the considerations that the enrollment at LC possibly decreased from 960 students to 800 due to rumors of a move or its closing in the late 1990s, and that because development of the facility was put on hold since the late 1990s, it is possible that this factor played a role in its marketability to

parents seeking certain features.

Algeo directed council members to view the last page of the packet, which showed success stories of 19 schools across the nation that overcame a push to close them and instead underwent renovation and expansion.

The list included Palmyra Area Middle School in Palmyra, Pa., and Northside Elementary School in Brooksville, Pa.

"We feel it can be done," Algeo said to council. "Thank you for your support."

After the meeting, Algeo, who teaches at St. Jude in Chalfont, said she believes the archdiocese cares about the LC situation.

"I feel positive about it's the right decision," she said. "I don't think the problems at LC need to be solved by a new school. I feel supporters of LC will do the right thing regardless of the outcome."