

New LC high school on hold

The Reporter on-line

Published: Thursday, July 16, 2009

By: Bradley Schlegel

A proposal by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to relocate Lansdale Catholic High School to a \$65 million facility in Hilltown has been postponed indefinitely.

The slumping economy and funding issues have forced officials to delay construction of the Lansdale Catholic Regional High School, according to Kevin Mulligan, the archdiocese's associate director for communications.

Construction on the state-of-the-art facility — to be located on a 65-acre parcel at the intersection of Limekiln Pike and Rickert Road in Bucks County, approximately 8.5 miles from its current location — initially was scheduled to begin next year and open in September 2012.

Calls to Jim Casey and Timothy Quinn — the president and principal, respectively, of Lansdale Catholic — were not returned Wednesday.

The date to break ground could be determined next June at the completion of the archdiocese's \$200 million capital campaign, according to Mulligan.

He said a portion of the funds will be utilized to offset construction costs for Lansdale Regional and Pope John Paul II, a similar school in Upper Providence.

Construction at that facility — which will combine students from St. Pius X in Pottstown and Kennedy-Kennrick High School in Norristown — is expected to open on schedule in September 2010.

The archdiocese always planned on breaking ground on Lansdale Regional after Pope John Paul II was completed, according to Mulligan.

“And we always said construction of the school was pending the required funding,” he said. “At some point, there will be a new groundbreaking ceremony set. As the fund process becomes more clear and the economy improves, we will have a better idea when that will be.”

Mulligan could not say whether the delay would allow Lansdale Catholic High School on Lansdale Avenue to remain open beyond June 2012, its previously targeted closing date.

“I can't predict what could happen between now and then,” he said.

Approximately 850 students attend Lansdale Catholic, which opened in 1949.

In January 2008, Cardinal Justin Rigali, the archbishop of Philadelphia, announced plans for the archdiocese to build two modern Catholic high schools.

To save money, both facilities are to utilize identical architecture and features, including a 90-seat chapel, more than 30 wireless classrooms, five science laboratories, three computer laboratories and a library/media resource center, a television studio, two art rooms, choral/band rooms, a 432-seat cafeteria, a 1,200-seat auditorium, a 1,000-seat main gymnasium, an auxiliary gymnasium and a fitness center.

Plans also exist for six competition-level sports fields, a running track with an all-weather surface and six competition-level tennis courts for each school.

Jerry Parsons, who chairs of the board of education for the archdiocese, said the property and buildings that now are the site of Lansdale Catholic High School would be sold to help finance the construction of the new school in Hilltown.

Mulligan said he wasn't sure how the construction delay would affect the potential sale of the school.