

Archdiocese is the one that should be giving answers

Editorial Page
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YOUR SAY

Tom Francis

This is in response to Bishop McFadden's letter to *The Reporter* on Dec. 5:

I am one of the several people on the committee for the feasibility study who has a dissenting point of view regarding the proposed Hilltown site as described by Bishop McFadden in his letter to *The Reporter* on Dec 5.

I served on the LC Planning Committee and had a special role on the demographics subcommittee.

I respectfully disagree with McFadden when he tells readers that the "archdiocese has been, and continues to be, willing to listen to all points of view."

The demographic data I developed and presented to the full committee was largely ignored because it showed that the projected student population for the new school in Hilltown would most likely fall short of 1,000 students.

In contrast to what McFadden described as a growing population, published data

across the state shows that the school age population is leveling and tends to decline over the next decade or two.

And, the Catholic population shows an even steeper decline than the general population.

I was surprised when McFadden told *The Reporter* that it owes its readers a clear explanation of the feasibility study. Again, I respectfully disagree.

The Reporter and the public have been denied important details from the parents' study.

The burden for explanation rests with the archdiocese. *The Reporter* can't broadcast data it doesn't have.

I respectfully disagree with McFadden when he says that "we have proactively communicated with our communities, our parishes and the media about the percentage of parents (32 percent) who would definitely or most likely send their children to a new school in Hilltown."

Notably absent is any reference to the 8,000 plus alumni of Lansdale Catholic.

And, notably absent was any comment about the 68 percent of parents who did not agree to send their children to Hilltown.

I think that many in the 68 percent prefer to send their

children to LC in Lansdale.

Even the LC Planning Committee did not receive the survey details in a written form.

Finally, when the 32 percent of parents who said they would send their children to a new school in Hilltown were asked about their willingness to pay a tuition premium, about half of them changed their position to a negative.

That drop out rate is not part of the picture drawn by the archdiocese.

I think it's a risky gamble to bet \$45 million on a new school in Hilltown that may not attract as many students as the current facility in Lansdale.

Tom Francis is a member of the Lansdale Catholic Planning Committee.