

May 7, 2019

Dear School Board Members,

We, the elected Mayor and Council Members of the City of Grosse Pointe, are united in opposition to the closure of Lewis Maire Elementary School, 740 Cadieux. In the best interests of the Grosse Pointe Park and Grosse Pointe City residents served by Maire School and in the best interest of the entire Grosse Pointe community, we strongly urge you to vote to keep Maire School open.

We are amazed and shocked that the School Board would even consider closing Maire School. Closing Maire would create a hole in the center of the district that would reverberate throughout the community.

As you know, Maire is the top-performing elementary school in the district. It is the only Grosse Pointe public school ranked in the 99th percentile for Michigan elementary schools, ranking 16th statewide. Maire was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for its excellence in education as a National Blue Ribbon School. At 80% full, it already meets the usage goals set by the Board of Education at the outset of this process. Its kindergarten has three classes, indicating the appeal Maire has to young families that Grosse Pointe City and Grosse Pointe Park are attracting.

It is not an accident that Maire School is a success. It has a long culture of support and togetherness. It has all the characteristics of an exemplary school: effective administrators, a cadre of dedicated teachers, a rich history of exceptional parental support. Just last year, the PTO raised more than \$100,000 for new playground equipment. Maire is home to one of the oldest Cub Scout Troops in Michigan, Troop 19.

The City of Grosse Pointe is a model in how it supports Maire School through innovative public safety initiatives. Over the last three years the City has worked with a committee of Park and City residents, administrators, teachers, public safety officials and engineers to develop a Safe Routes to School plan involving education and infrastructure improvements. The State of Michigan has awarded a grant for this approach — the only such grant in the district — to implement this plan this year. The City has also implemented a unique officer-in-the-school program at Maire. Named PANDA, for Protect and Nurture During Academics, the program provides daily, positive interactions for students with Grosse Pointe City Police officers at the school. Finally, with our new Public Safety headquarters under construction only blocks away on Mack, the City is in the best position to quickly protect Maire School in the case of an incident. All of these initiatives supplement the more than \$400,000 in security and building improvements the School District has just invested in the Maire School building.

We would hope that in making its decisions, the School Board would prioritize what is working for our school-age children and their families. Maire works; it is working the best! It would be a horrible mistake and unjustifiable disruption to the community to close Maire. It just isn't possible to move and recreate it elsewhere. Such a stellar culture as it exists now at Maire is irreplaceable.

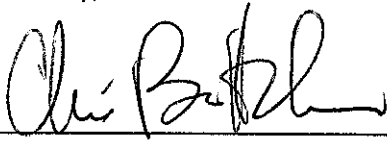
We also urge you to take into account the broader aspects of a decision to close Maire. One of the School Board's stated criteria for decision making is the community impact. To lose Maire would be a strike to the heart of the community around The Village. The Village is the core of the One Grosse Pointe community, is located on a major corridor entering Grosse Pointe City and Grosse Pointe Park, and is close to Mack Avenue. Maire School is a key component of what makes this area unique and attractive. For more than 80 years, Maire School has been integral to this walkable business and residential district. Maire supports the viability of The Village, the Grosse Pointes' primary shopping district, with teacher, student and parent traffic. The playground and play fields, which are in short supply in the Pointes, are used by visitors, residents and neighborhood sports teams such as Neighborhood Club soccer and Grosse Pointe Farms-City Little League. Its architecture, recognized by the State of Michigan as a registered historic site, contributes to the traditional appeal and appearance of the area. To vacate such a building would have a detrimental impact on both the economic vitality of The Village as well as the homes in this neighborhood, all of which are vulnerable to decline due to their proximity to nearby areas suffering from disinvestment.

In addition to bearing the business and residential impact that closing Maire would have on the surrounding neighborhood, the City of Grosse Pointe is already being asked to bear the burden of repurposing another major school facility at 389 St. Clair, the 1902 building that was the site of the original Grosse Pointe school. While the City is committed to working with the District in repurposing this building, it will not be easy to find a project and a developer who can do the project in a way that fits with the residential character of that neighborhood and is also financially advantageous to the School District. The challenge at Maire would be even greater. And it is most unfair to ask the City to bear the brunt of two buildings being closed when the adjacent communities would not be asked to give up any of their either three or four school facilities.

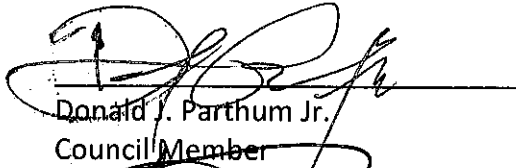
The savings from closing one elementary school is \$628,000, or about .628% of the District's \$100 million budget. As collectively pointed out recently by the Grosse Pointe Mayors at a meeting with President Brian Summerfield and Superintendent Gary Niehaus, that reduction is not worth the negative impact on the Grosse Pointe community. This is true particularly when you consider the potential loss of property tax dollars from decreased property values. In fact, the School District's own numbers and projections make it clear that the elementary school population has stabilized and is projected to be stable for the foreseeable future. The upcoming decline in attendance are coming from middle school and high school class sizes. It makes little sense to close elementary schools that serve as neighborhood schools and are critical to all. Schools, and particularly elementary schools, are the first thing a family looks at when seeking to locate to a community. The loss of our traditional neighborhood elementary schools would be a huge setback to the whole Grosse Pointe community. Instead of closing elementary schools, please consider supplementing their benefit to and usage by their neighborhoods with child-care programs starting at age two and early childhood programs in each school. That way, the School Board can reconsider the Blue Ribbon Committee's recommendation to close the Barnes facility, but do it by distributing the early childhood programs into all of the neighborhoods that they serve and by relocating the special education programs into an elementary school that still remains at less than the 80% occupancy goal.

We are seriously concerned about the direction the School Board appears to be heading. Please do not close Maire School. As the home of the original District #1 Grosse Pointe school building, its current headquarters, and its best performing school, we urge you not to abandon the City of Grosse Pointe.

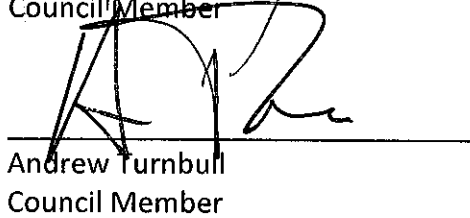
Sincerely,



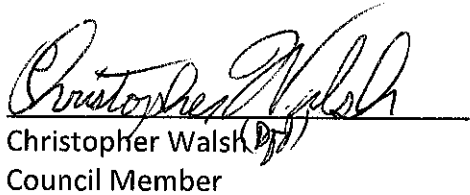
Christopher Boettcher, Mayor



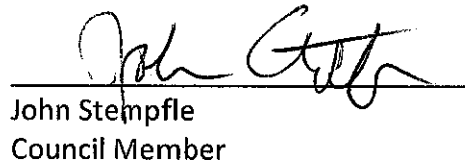
Donald J. Parthum Jr.
Council Member



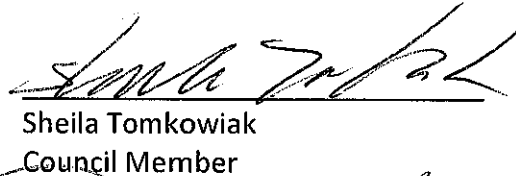
Andrew Turnbull
Council Member



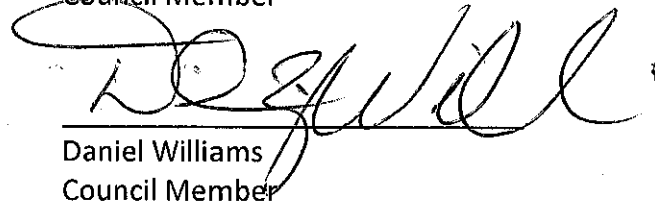
Christopher Walsh
Council Member



John Stempfle
Council Member



Sheila Tomkowiak
Council Member



Daniel Williams
Council Member