

Auburn Community Conversation #5

Location: Sherwood Heights Elementary School

Date: October 2, 2013

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Given the difficult decisions that our community must face, and the reality that property tax increases must be minimized, what are our priorities for Auburn's future?

PRIORITIES INTRODUCED BY RESIDENTS

Listed in order of priority as discussed by residents.

- Maintaining infrastructure: roads, facilities, schools
- Education
- Improved communications
- Other

DISCUSSION NOTES

Points of view included:

Maintaining infrastructure

Discussion on Roads

Is repaving well planned and coordinated with other repairs? Seems like tear up newly repaved roads right after completion.

Does the state coordinate with the city?

Could some roads be returned to dirt?

New paving makes roads faster and promotes speeding. Keep pot holes as traffic calming? Add speed bumps or other traffic calming?

Could there be traffic calming conversations in neighborhoods?

Answers included:

There is a 10-year plan, based on funds available. Prioritized by traffic flow. Linked to pipe replacement when possible.

Penalty if a road is torn up within a designated period after repaving.

Some roads could be dirt although not everyone wants that. Some increased costs including wear & tear on plows.

There are neighborhood traffic calming options.

Discussion on facilities, schools

Be pro-active not reactive.

Need to fund maintenance plans.

Is there a maintenance reserve?

Since so much maintenance has been financed with bonds, there now is debt service just to pay for old maintenance.

Maintenance must be budgeted.

Recent cuts to the school budget included some maintenance money.

Education

School budget

- Need creative restructuring. Pay close attention to impacts on property taxes.
- Need to look at everything including cutting co-curricular.
- Willing to pay more property taxes to support good schools. Some said yes. Some said no.
- Less impact on residential property taxes if more economic development.
- If build anything, it must be maintained.
- Do we need new sports fields with every new school? Some said yes. Some said no. Good discussion.

Build a new multi-grade school complex? A good conversation.

- A shared middle school and high school might be good.
- Would not want to lose neighborhood schools for elementary.
- Might even be good for elementary.
- Need to keep children separated in different school buildings.
- Combining ages is good for mentoring.
- Long bus rides for small children?
- On buses now.
- Problems for elementary children on same buses with middle and high school students.
- Neighborhood schools help maintain strong sense of neighborhoods.
- If students stay in one complex, it might not be so traumatizing to change schools like it is now.
- Would it save money?

New curriculum: Mass Customized Education

What is it?

Change what is needed for facilities?

Build more involvement in the schools

Create approaches that invite more people to become stakeholders.

All plans must be well-done with lots of thoughtful discussion with many people.

Allow more people more time to give input to school plans and budgets before the vote.

Community voices matter and need to be heard.

Communications processes need to be two-way with enough time for listening, talking, input. Input must be welcomed.

Other

Q: Why don't residents vote on the municipal budget in addition to the school budget?

A: The Municipal Budget is adopted according the procedure set in Auburn Charter. A different process would require changing the Charter or State Law. (short version of the response.)

Many people asked: How to help more people really understand how local and state government works?