

Weatherstone Elementary braces for more students

By Cynthia LaChapelle
Contributing Writer

Weatherstone Elementary parents reeled at the prospect of adding 16 new classes to the school by August and whether it was physically possible to do so.

The news was presented at a PTA meeting Tuesday, March 17.

Principal Phyllis Bennett and Christian Lighthall from the Wake County Schools facilities department answered questions from parents about Weatherstone's continued growth and use of mobile classrooms.

Although official projections for the coming year have not been released yet by the school system, PTA Vice President Laura Cheston presented a report of a survey she had undertaken. Her study projects adding 227 students by August and another 180 by January 1. This puts Weatherstone's enrollment at over 1,400 by January in a facility designed for 750.

Cheston broke this down as 16 additional classes required by the beginning of school year and eight more by January. Bennett said the school has five sites approved for trailers before getting into parking lots and playgrounds. Weatherstone currently has 914 students in 39 classes.

Lighthall announced that she has already approved a request for four additional trailers to be placed at Weatherstone for the coming year.

Cheston's survey takes into account new construction and the addition of two English as a Second Language classes. She confirmed her methods with Wake County

'The 1998-99 school year is going to be a year of severe crowding. Five classrooms will be added without impinging. More than that will go on parking lots, play areas, etc.'

—Christian Lighthall,
Wake County Public Schools

school officials. Lighthall noted that Cheston's report looked better and more detailed than the official one.

Cheston got data on houses under construction from local developers and real estate agents. She includes projections from Preston Village, Preston Grande, Carpenter Village, The Groves, and Preston's Sterling Green apartments. Not included are figures from other developments such as Carpenter Park, Riggsbee Farms and Georgetown, who did not reply.

Lighthall said, "The 1998-99 school year is going to be a year of severe crowding. Five classrooms will be added without impinging. More than that will go on parking lots, play areas, etc."

"I call it equity in crowding," she said. "Art on a cart. Is everybody floating music, art . . . these programs? K through 5 will be in classes. It's the other programs that I will look to the principals for creative solutions."

Besides the art and music rooms, additional spaces that may be used for classrooms are the gym and media center. She said children in some schools have been in storage rooms, hallways (even the receiving dock at Davis Drive) all year long.

When asked if permanent buildings will be built, Lighthall said no. "Never. Our board directive is no increase in the size of schools. Anything over 750 is lost efficiency." She said studies had shown that elementary school children did better with even small school sizes. Some parents pointed out that she was talking about adding students far beyond the ideal levels.

Lighthall said the real solution is to build schools at the rate new students are added. She said school officials would like to have a say when building permits are issued.

"We are trying to get on the review committees for the permit process," she said. "Even our building program continues us in the red—not black, positive numbers. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, but 98-99 will be real bleak."

Some parents asked if the school could be capped, but Lighthall said that was a political decision. "I wish you would ask Bill Fletcher that," she said. Fletcher is the Cary area representative to the Wake County school board.

When asked if the mobile classrooms that they were to receive would actually be in place at the beginning of school, Lighthall said



Students are exposed to the elements as they walk in between some of the school's temporary classrooms.

the process has been revamped so a situation will not occur like last year, when students were displaced from the cafeteria, gymnasium, music and art rooms until October, when mobile units could be occupied.

Parents asked whether enough trailers could be sent to meet the needs.

Lighthall said she could move 40 units and has a budget for 60, but she already has 97 requests.

"Come August, there will be last minute registrations," she warned. "We have to react to those." She also noted that requests made in August would take some time to fill.

Karen Powell, director of Weatherstone's technology pro-

gram, gave a brief report to the group on how she had spent several thousand dollars raised by the PTA to buy computers for the media center. She said she would give a report at the next meeting for a plan to distribute them among the classrooms. The media center was among the places listed by Bennett and Lighthall as a possible class site.

Weatherstone students at Pieces of Gold

Congratulations to Ashley Crowe, fourth grader, and Rachel Rice, fifth grader, for representing Weatherstone Elementary School at the annual "Gifts of Gold" Art Display at Memorial Auditorium on March 11.

Fund-raiser

A run/walk fund-raiser will be held Saturday, March 28 at 9 a.m. to raise money for Clay Griffith, husband of art teacher Mary Ann Athens. The money will help pay for his cancer treatment. Teaching assistant Claire Skerry will also be collecting donations to be presented in a lump sum from Friends of Weatherstone.

Teacher of the year

Mary Ann Athens is the 1997-98 Teacher of the Year nominee to represent Weatherstone.

Spring Carnival

Thanks to all who volunteered and participated in the second annual Spring Carnival on March 7. Over \$9,000 was raised, and every child won bags full of prizes and cakes.

The following people won raffles for gift baskets: Rainy Day—Susan Mann; Picnic Party—Jenna George; Spaghetti Dinner—Amanda Franklin; Pampered Mom—Jamie Marshburn; Baking—Jeff Volz; Sports Day—Christopher McNeil; Coffee &

Tea—Susan Yeargin, Disney—Andy Smith; Barbie—Megan French, Action Figures—Nathan Peyhouse; Gardening—Tracey Noland; Stationery—Mary Ann Sutherland; Beanie Babies—Jessica Palmski;ica Palmski.

Clean-up
Spring Clean-Up and Planting will be held Saturday, April 4, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bring a shovel, a rake, and the whole family.

Pastries for parents

The next "Popovers for Parents" is Wednesday April 8 at 9-15 a.m. in the cafeteria. Parents are encouraged to drop in for tasty goodies and coffee after dropping off their children.

Developers want more apartments in Carpenter Village, Cary to study plan

Developers of Carpenter Village want to increase the number of apartments in the development, but Cary last month tabled the request until a growth management study for the town is completed.

Developers asked to increase the number of multifamily units from 275 to 370, and to redistribute the commercial units and apartments.

There would be fewer single-family homes built under the revised plan and the overall housing density of the development would increase from 5.9 units per acre to 6.1 units

per acre, an increase of less than 30 units, said Barbara Todd of ETD, formerly Charles Elam and Associates, land design firm.

Under the previous plan, the apartments and shops in the commercial area were mixed together, surrounding the village commons area, a green space that runs from Morrisville-Carpenter Road back to a lake.

"We are maintaining the same building arrangement we had before," Todd said. "But we are essentially putting the apartments on

one side and keeping the commercial on the other side," she said. "The appearance will be very similar to what it was before."

The Cary Growth Management Task Force plans to issue its recommendations in mid-April. The Cary Council will consider the revised plan at that time.

Meanwhile, officials from Cary visited Celebration, Florida, a neo-traditional community near Disney World to get ideas. Carpenter Village is the first neo-traditional community to be built in Cary.

Meyers convicted of damaging political signs

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mayor Margaret Broadwell. Mrs. Newnam and Mrs. Moore testified that they witnessed Meyers ripping a sign for Bruce Newnam, who was running for mayor against Mrs. Broadwell and Gordon Cromwell. Cromwell was the winner of the mayoral race.

Newnam, Morrisville's police chief, had released Meyers from employment as a part-time temporary officer last September. Meyers said the firing was in response to Meyers' wife, Donna, taking photos of civilians directing traffic but wearing police department vests.

The photos were submitted to the Attorney General's office and Chief Newnam was reprimanded by a state official for using the non-sworn officers wearing police department clothing to direct traffic.

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