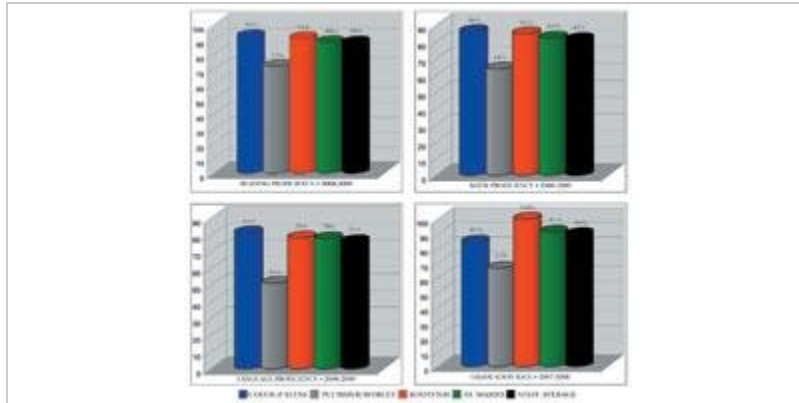


CDA school rejects Worley annexation



By Chris D'Angelo

Published: Tuesday, December 8, 2009 4:39 PM PST

Children in Worley will likely remain in the Plummer-Worley School District.

At a special board meeting Monday, the Coeur d'Alene school district unanimously rejected a petition filed by members of Save Our School in Worley to have the Kootenai County portion of the Plummer-Worley school district annexed into the Coeur d'Alene district.

The cost of maintaining the school in Worley for a limited number of students and the issues with busing students 30 miles to Coeur d'Alene each day were cited among the district's reasons for denying the petition.

Also noteworthy is the fact that had the annexation passed, Kootenai County residents within the Plummer-Worley district would have seen school property taxes increase from six cents to \$1.10 per \$1,000 of taxable property.

The Coeur d'Alene School District is now required to send a denial in writing to the State Board of Education. The state board will make the ultimate decision regarding the annexation.

Arguing that the annexation would not be in the best interest of the students, the Plummer-Worley district previously denied the petition and encouraged Coeur d'Alene to do the same prior to Monday's meeting.

On behalf of trustees, Superintendent of the Plummer-Worley School District, Judi Sharrett, sent a five-page recommendation letter to deny the petition to both the Coeur d'Alene district and the State Board of Education Dec. 2.

Among other concerns, the letter pointed out flaws in the petition's validity.

It (the petition) "appears to be fatally flawed on its face," the letter states.

First, in order to comply with state code, the petitioners must present a certification from the Kootenai County Clerk of the number of electors residing within the area to be excised and annexed, as well as verification that the signers of the petition constitute 25 percent of those electors.

Save Our School failed to do so.

According to the letter, this is no small matter.

"A cursory perusal of the persons signing the petition reveals that a number of the person are not qualified electors because they have not attained the age of 18 years, or do not live within the boundaries of the area sought to be excised and annexed, or do not even reside within the state of Idaho," the letter reads.

The law also limits the area which can be excised and annexed to one of not more than 50 square miles. The area encompassed in the petition is approximately 120 square miles, according to the recommendation letter.

It states, "Only by the worst kind of gerrymandering could the city of Worley be in a fifty square mile area within which there is ♦no schoolhouse or facility necessary for the operation of a school district."

When filing the petition n complete with 341 signatures n members of Save Our School cited three primary reasons for requesting the annexation; the inability of the Plummer-Worley district to provide a positive educational opportunity for students, failing to maintain the existing educational structures in a safe and well-maintained condition and rejecting community recommendations and suggestions from those in favor of providing maintenance for the elementary school located in Worley.

In the recommendation, Ms. Sharrett addressed each concern separately.

Ms. Sharrett argued against Save Our School's accusations that the district continues to provide a poor education.

In April, Lakeside Middle School was named a Title 1 Showcase School for raising student achievement, one of just 11 Idaho schools with large populations of low-income students who improved over the previous year.

Then in October, the middle school received three Additional Yearly Growth Awards from the State Board of Education for the 2008-09 school year.

"Our tremendous growth in student achievement is the result of hard work on behalf of the staff and students," the letter said.

The Plummer-Worley School District still awaits the decision of a state panel regarding its application for state funds to replace Lakeside Elementary in Worley with a new school in Plummer.

According to an email sent by Ms. Sharrett Tuesday morning, the panel met Dec. 3 to discuss the request and has since asked her to submit a written response to 12 detailed questions.

"The architect and I will be meeting with the panel this coming Tuesday (Dec. 15) in Boise to go over the application and answer those questions (and no doubt many more) face to face," she wrote.