

Additional Response to Questions:

Questions posed about the recommended PV closure:

1. Is there a “magic” number of students needed to keep PV open?

There is no set number. As you know, building layout and capacity would have some bearing on numbers. We know that at one time the mountain schools were around 200. I would expect that 125-135 would be a sound range.

2. What are some of the options explored to keep PV open?

There have been many... We started by looking at moving lines. That will provide more students, but to do that you're pulling from other schools. In fact we had one set of lines that backed up to the Elon ES property. With boundaries, the bus ride length continues to be the key issue and it affects all others. A magnet or special school... distance is the first problem, but also a magnet school to be truly effective (based on experience and research) would have a specialized curriculum and staff. There would costs for such a program plus all staff would have to be licensed and/or specially trained as gifted teachers. It couldn't be a “stand-alone” school—the kids would have a base school and travel to the PV Magnet and back to the base school. Not to do this draws off the crème of the crop from other schools, so to be fair it would have to operate much like the Governor's School Magnet. Now distance is even more of an issue because the kids report to base, bus to PV, back to base... most of the day spent on a bus! An elementary alternative school cannot be supported through experience and research that does not support those restrictive environments for young children. An On-Site Day Treatment Center again it's possible but the distance is the issue. Every program we have examined would have additional cost or the distance is something that cannot be ignored. As to redistricting the entire county would require stopping all out of zone requests (even for issues related to family child care) plus it would disrupt all schools... even those far removed from PV.

3. What might be some of the long term impact of closing?

With the county not growing at a strong pace (many new moves are retirees) it is anticipated that a decline in population will continue (see the Weldon-Cooper information). The school division is currently dropping approximately 50 kids a year eventually that will “bottom out.”

4. What are some of the real costs to close PV?

It really depends on what becomes of the building (a BOS decision). If fully closed down, the building could be “mothballed.” To do so there would still be some limited cost (borne by the BOS) for mold prevention and security. The movement of equipment would be done by our own people or hourly temp employees, and it would go to existing schools. We have storage space for items not needed quickly.

5. Who will pay for the remaining debt on the gym at PV?

The gym bond (like all construction bonds) is county debt, so if it's no longer a school, the building would revert to the county for their use, and the debt would continue to be paid (until retirement) by the county. School Board responsibility for the building ceases when the last piece of school equipment leaves the building.

6. Do you have a feel for what the building/ community look like in five years?

Of course, this response is personal; opinion based on what I know. As I said in my response to question 3, the community will continue to shrink unless there is a major boom of younger couples with children. If you take a closer look many home sites are being bought by retired, or land being bought for logging. Statistically an average home holds 2.6 people (.6 child). It will take a LOT of houses to fill any school. I honestly feel there is no solution for PV over the next 5 years or I wouldn't have made my recommendation. If home construction were to take off in a big way, we would still have a considerable lag in getting kids to school age and in schools. The major factors in the recommendation to close is (1) their isolation, (2) lack of a vigorous home building program in the area, (3) depressed business environment in the area and the county (even if a major business arrives it takes some time to generate the income to make a dent in the tax picture), and (4) land in the area used in such a way as to discourage large home tracts. As to the building I sincerely hope there is a way to repurpose it, but I feel that may not happen.

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