September 22, 2015

Nick & Amy Boccieri

309 Aberdeen Dr.

Pittsburgh, PA. 15239

Dr. Glasspool and board members of Plum Borough School District,

 We are writing to you in regards to the Act 34 hearing that was held on August 26, 2015 on behalf of Regency Park Elementary School. Although we can sympathize with the students and especially the parents of Regency Park in being told they were getting a new school and then they weren’t, we are not proponents of a new Regency Park.

 Forty to fifty years ago Plum Borough built five (5) brand new elementary schools, all around the same time. Forty to fifty years later all those elementary schools are in disrepair, requiring attention to remodel, rebuild or renovate at the same time. With the power of hindsight we see how detrimental it was to build five new elementary schools at the same time, knowing now that they are all requiring upgrades at the same time, thus costing the district a lot of money at one time.

 Not too long ago the board hired an independent outside group to conduct a demographic study for Plum. Not only did that study show a decline in enrollment in the entire school district, but it showed a decline in enrollment specifically in Regency Park. The incoming kindergarten classes are not big enough to sustain the outgoing graduating classes, not to mention that kindergarten class sizes are down this year across the district and projected to be down in the years to come.

 The argument going around about the potential 216 new homes being built is null and void. Those homes are not guaranteed to be built within a certain time frame to justify building a new Regency for it. I live in The Highlands, and was told my community would sell out within a year of building my home. I will be here four years in November and the final home is just now being built. None of those 216 projected homes are in the Regency Park area either, nor is there a guarantee on time completed.

 Regency Park has no room for growth. They are landlocked and stagnant in their growth. The elderly are not moving out at a rate fast enough to bring in new and young families who might be interested in purchasing those homes. The families that are staying put have already sent the majority of those kids through elementary school and have kids in the middle school or high school if not already graduated.

 People are NOT moving into Plum. Our taxes are too high and our school district is not performing to where our taxes are placed at. Our taxes are a huge deterrent for people looking to move into Plum. If they aren’t moving into Plum then they aren’t moving into Regency either.

 You are proposing building a two run grade level school for the same price you paid to build two, four run schools in the borough. This is not fiscally responsible. Almost $13 million dollars for a two run classroom that might be sustained for 5 years? Then what happens to that $13 million school that hasn’t been paid off but sits empty?

 Please do not make this an emotional decision. You paid for a demographics study, listen to it. The people making the biggest noise are Regency Park parents, and for good reason, but they are emotionally charged in this decision as well. You all represent the entire Plum Borough School District, not just Regency Park parents and their families. Again, although I sympathize with their fight it is not sustainable for the right now. Right now our district is broke; taxes are inevitable, higher taxes for a school that is not necessary is not going to help property values. People are going to default on their mortgages because this way of thinking and spending cannot be sustained by the taxpayers for much longer. At some point the proverbial camel’s back will break, and it will all come crashing down.

 We propose you wait five years. Redistrict again. Split the Regency kids between Pivik and Center. Wait and see if there is new growth within the district. Wait and see if the demographics study that you all paid for is true or false and go from there. Building a third elementary school at this time when the district has no money, has the study to prove the population isn’t there as well as the hindsight to see that multiple brand new schools at the same time all come needing repair at the same time is detrimental to the district. If you are not capable of making a fiscally sound and responsible decision for the entire community of Plum Borough then place a referendum on the November ballot for the community to decide. People are afraid to speak up in public for fear of retribution and attack. It’s only continuing to divide the community and pit friends against friends, neighbors against neighbors. A ballot is anonymous and secure and will give you the best feel on the entire community.

 We urge you all to consider all these options. Look back on the demographics study done by a third party group, and learn from the past mistakes and take a good hard look at the district’s finances. If you do these things it will be clear to you that a new Regency Park school is NOT in the best interest of Plum.

Sincerely,

 Nick & Amy Boccieri