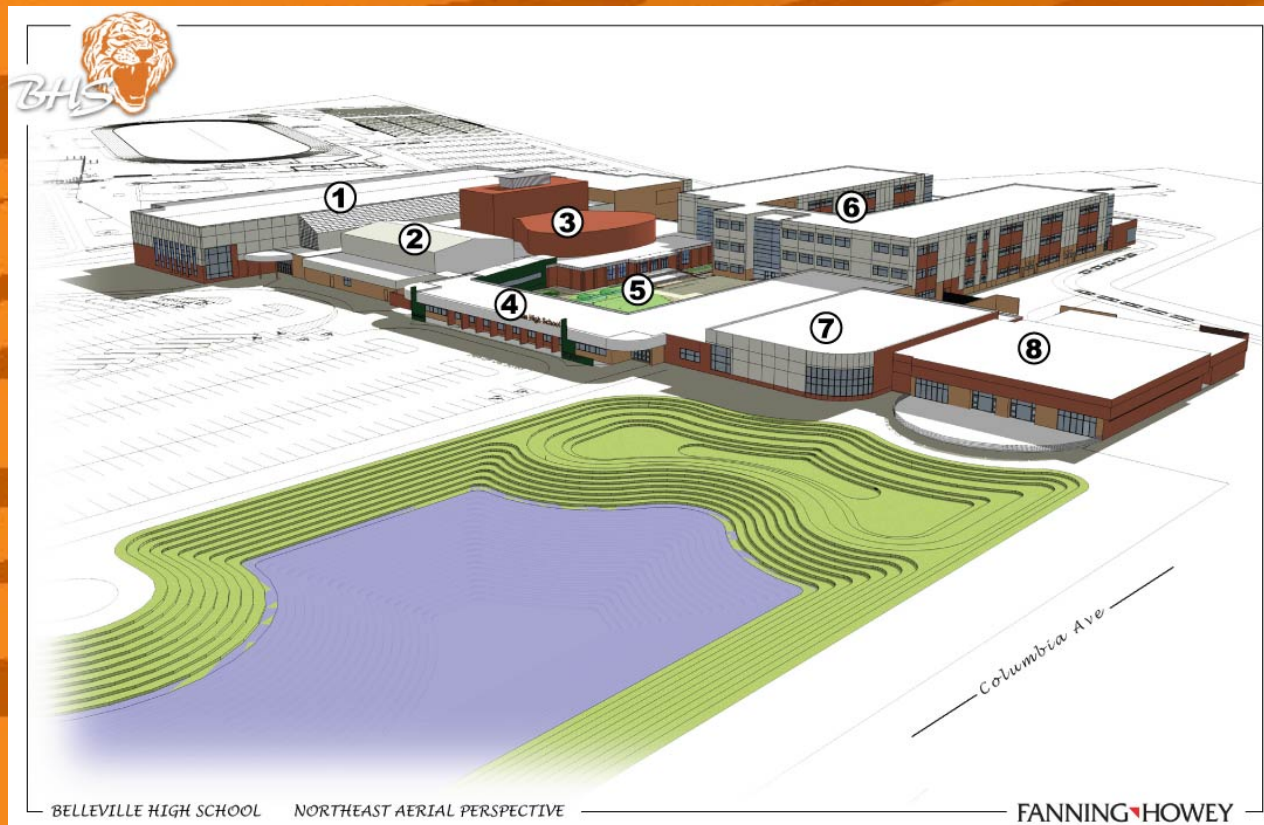


Beating the Odds: Winning Approval of \$80 Million Bond in a November Election



This presentation is dedicated to
the memory of

Pete L. Lazaroff, Jr.

VBPS Community

- ✦ An ultra conservative group unsuccessfully tried to hijack the school board in the 1990's resulting in a bitter six year period that still divides the community
- ✦ They started a charter school in the district – Motto: "We will burry you"
- ✦ They own a newspaper in town that is distributed weekly – the District takes a beating every Thursday
- ✦ They are the organized opposition to any bond election by the District
- ✦ One other newspaper in town that is the liberal voice – pro public schools

Belleville High School

- ✦ The high school was built in 1926 on a 39 acre site
- ✦ Renovated after a fire in 1956
- ✦ Additions in 1969 (auditorium), 1978 (science rooms and administrative office), and 1990 (music rooms and cafeteria)
- ✦ It Is a crazy quilt of a building 75% of which is falling apart and out of date
- ✦ Well past it's expiration date
- ✦ We passed a sinking fund in 1999 to build two new elementary schools – it took us three tries

2004 Bond Proposal

- ✦ 2004 - \$150 million proposal
- ✦ 100 Acres on the north side of our District
- ✦ Had a little something for all schools – A bloated plan
- ✦ Defeated 3 to 1
- ✦ Location disputes – we cannot build on current site because it is too small
- ✦ Desertion of the community bond team because September election
- ✦ Could not get the press interested in the story

2006 Bond Proposal

- ✦ 2006 - \$111 million Proposal
- ✦ 100 Acres at a more central location - we cannot build on current site because it is too small
- ✦ Build a high school and merge our vocational education building
- ✦ Pete and I would take the lead with town hall style meetings
- ✦ Ran a traditional campaign – yard signs, parent lists, phone banks, newspaper ads

2006 Bond Proposal

- ✦ Defeated 2 to 1
- ✦ Too much negative press and negative word of mouth by organized opposition due to town hall meetings
- ✦ One positive – Now we knew how the opposition worked

2008 Bond Proposal

- ✦ Pete presented a surprise plan to the Board in 2007
- ✦ \$79 million on the current site of 39 acres?!
- ✦ The board approved it?!
- ✦ How are we going to stage it if it is too small?
- ✦ Pete continued to work in secrecy throughout the winter and spring of 2008 – no one knew the detailed plan

Worst Time EVER for a Bond Run

- ◆ July 2008 – Pete diagnosed with leukemia
- ◆ August 2008 – Pete pressed for details, was told to go to the architect
- ◆ September 2008 – Worked closely with the architect – finally had details

Worst Time EVER for a Bond Run

- ✦ Interim Superintendent uninterested in publicly promoting the plan
- ✦ The staff of the high school HATED this plan
- ✦ Lost 400 students - \$3 million down in funding – cuts inevitable
- ✦ Community group \$5,000 in debt – no money, no organized support

Worst Time EVER for a Bond Run

- ✦ Facing a failed economy – worst since the “Great Depression” – Conventional Wisdom – no one is going to vote for increased taxes
- ✦ Strong organized opposition
- ✦ Had more than one issue to promote – sinking fund proposal also on the ballot
- ✦ Plante Moran CRESA – **Snowball's chance in Hell of passing either proposal**

What's the Plan?

- ◆ Interim Superintendent – Forget the bond; pass the sinking fund
- ◆ Interim Superintendent – Run a clean campaign, not scorched earth
- ◆ Piggybacked the bond materials on the newsletter budget to pay for them
- ◆ Create a PowerPoint and visit all of the PTOs in the District – Traveling road show

What Happened Next?

- ✦ Much of the groundwork for a grassroots effort had been put in place – I just didn't recognize it at the time
 - Community H.U.G. – Community Leaders
 - PTO Council – Parent Leaders
 - Operation Warm – Business Leaders
 - MSU Bond Exercise – BHS Graduates
- ✦ PTO Council first presentation – Gained a partner
 - Developed a “Stooge Routine”
 - The Architect Joined Us at Many of the Presentations and Provided Boards of Conceptual Design

What Happened Next?

- ✦ Did not use town hall meetings
 - PTOs – At Each Meeting Produced a New Partner
 - Government Televised Meetings
 - Community Groups – Rotary, Eagles, Moose
 - Senior Citizens
 - Had Tables and Booths at School Events (Homecoming, Open Houses, Conferences)
- ✦ Contacted a BHS graduate that was passionate about a new high school
 - Created a Card to Pass Around
 - Created a FaceBook Page
 - Handmade Signs that Businesses Actually Placed in Their Windows
 - Organized an Alumni Group

What Happened Next?

- ◆ Tours of the high school
 - Community and Staff Came Out for Tours
 - BHS Media Students Produced Video of Tours
 - Media Ran Out of New Angles on the Election – Contacted Us for a Tour!
- ◆ Used opposing newspaper against them
 - Plante Moran Produced a Flyer as Part of our Contract
 - Paid \$315 for an Insert Out of My Budget

What Happened Next?

- ✦ General election was a positive
 - All the Positive Obama Voters Voted for Proposal
 - Opposition Was Busy Getting Their Candidate Elected and Stayed Home – Thought the Economy Would Take Care of Us
- ✦ Stayed under the radar
 - Timed Presentations for Just After Newspaper Deadlines
 - They Were Busy Getting Their Candidate Elected

Election Results

✦ The bond passed 10,652 to 10,396

256 Votes

✦ The sinking fund passed 11,325 to 10,695

630 Votes