Milford students may shift to Freshman Center

BARRIE-JOHN MURPHY

There is a growing consensus among parents and teachers that Milford Middle School will close, but lingering doubt when that will happen and where its students will go.

The Quakertown school board will make a decision on the fate of the beloved but ramshackle building in July following an emotional public hearing last week in which many in the community implored board members to keep it open for at least the next school year.

One plan that is gaining support is moving Milford Middle students to the Freshman Center, a former middle school, and adding a ninth grade at the high school. During Thursday’s board meeting, when board Vice President Charles Shermer asked Assistant Superintendent Nancianne Edwards for a financial analysis of this plan, the request immediately drew a loud round of audience applause.

Several other board members also indicated they would be on board with the Milford to Freshman Center plan, including directors Ron Jackson, Dwight Anderson and Austin Sedicum, who added that it should only be a temporary transition.

Ryan Wieand, a district teacher and president of the Community Education Association (QCEA), said the plan had not been given the same attention as other plans, which favor combining the two middle schools in one capacity or another, with more than $12 million needed for additional classrooms and upgrades.

“Why waste $12 million on the expansion of Strayer if later you might need to build that new middle school?” Wieand said, referring to a plan to add a new middle school on West Pumping Station Road in the event of rising student enrollment. “The plan I propose saves approximately $12 million and utilizes the current district space more efficiently at the same time.”

Wieand said his proposal would alleviate many parents’ concerns about overcrowding in the sports and music programs because the two schools would remain in separate buildings, and Milford would retain its separate identity and current staff.

He pointed out the center’s closer location to Milford would cut down on busing times, and congestion wouldn’t be an issue as the high school begins approximately an hour earlier. More importantly, any transition would be a lot more smoother and a lot less expensive than a move to Strayer, where modular classrooms and fencing would need to be erected.

The only drawback Wieand foresees would be a shortage of lockers for the incoming freshmen, but that he claimed could be alleviated by upperclassmen and women not using theirs.
Edwards said she would report back on the financial implications of such a move at the April 27 board meeting.

In other news, Bucks County Board of Commissioners unanimously rejected the district’s latest proposal to move polling stations out of its elementary schools. The district maintained the switch was necessary because of security concerns and loss of instructional days.