

# An Alternative to Building a 2<sup>nd</sup> South Kitsap High School

## Rebuttal of the Mega High School Opinion

*Comments rebutting some of the statements made by a former South Kitsap School Board Member regarding the need for a 2<sup>nd</sup> SK High School.*

- Prior make up of school board claimed there are 2600 students attending SKHS when Public School Review and other official records reflect there are actually only 2,293 students enrolled at SKHS. Here is the link that provides the actual student population figure: <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/south-kitsap-high-school-profile>
- Prior school board member cited a school (prototypical) model developed by State of Washington using 600 students in a high school produces good results and those adverse effects arise when enrollment reaches 2,100 students. SKHS student population from 2019- 2020 is actually 2,293. If you subtract the 700 9<sup>th</sup> graders claimed by prior school board members the student population would actually be 1,593. Which leads us to this question:
- Why did the prior school board intentionally create a student overcrowding situation at SKHS by transferring 700 or more 9<sup>th</sup> graders to the high school when they knew the student population would exceed a study recommended student populations at high schools? The prior school board has gone on the record claiming g there was plenty of room for the 9<sup>th</sup> graders to be moved to the high school and that it would not compromise safety... “Plenty of room” was stated.
- There is no doubt that the prior school board is culpable in creating a student population at the high school that the study cited concludes “could” result in adverse effects on student learning. Did the prior

school board manipulate student population counts at SKHS for leverage in attempts to or scare the voters into voting for a 2<sup>nd</sup> high school? The Gates Foundation Study cited below contradicts a former school board members claims.

- It was claimed that a cited Gates Foundation Study that suggests 1,400-1600 students is acceptable student population in high schools. However, studies were used to argue what bigger schools are not better for student's performance and engagement. The Gates Foundation study actually came up with a different conclusion.
- "The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation spent billions of dollars exploring the idea that smaller high schools might result in higher graduation rates and better test scores. Instead, it found the key to better education is not necessarily smaller schools but more effective teachers." Here is the link to that article: <https://www.eschoolnews.com/2009/05/29/gates-foundation-teachers-trump-class-size/>
- National statistics reflect that class sizes at SKSD are actually 22.1 students per teacher 2019-2020. Please go to: <om/south-kitsap-high-school-profile>
- It appears that the members of the prior school board did not get the memo about the the quality of teacher and teaching, not class sizes that have the most influence on student academic performance and scholastic success.
- Did the prior school board think that transferring 700 or more 9<sup>th</sup> graders to the high school could result in a detriment to student learning at the highschool?

One prior school board member chides Dexignspro's illustration/rendering of what a larger SKHS school campus might look like. The board member called Dexignspro's work "pretty", but lacks details, etc. It is notable that the illustration/rendering the District has "so far" provided is only a frontal - one dimensional view. The District's rendering provides no architectural drawings, no engineering specifications. Aren't these some of the same criticisms made about the Dexignspro alternative to 2<sup>nd</sup> HS conceptual illustration?

The District's "Plan" that continues to be pushed on our community has never gone through the required feasibility study/review required by OSPI. More about this below. The District has yet to meet the State OSPI's requirements to submit feasibility studies to them prior to any bond being put on the ballot for voter consideration. This is not a choice, it is a bond requirement! This lack of compliance by the Board has occurred the last three times that the District has put bonds on the ballot.

Without the required feasibility studies being conducted it is not possible for OPSI or the District to determine if the land they own near Old Clifton Road is suitable to build on, especially given how many new environmental requirements and standards are now in place since the land was originally purchased by the District. There are wetlands, there are bears, and there are likely many more environmental issues and protected species that have yet to be considered by the District. Recently a "big fight" over water rights by the city and the district has stalled further residential development planned near McCormick Woods.

All of this taken as a whole reflects that the District is not ready to build on the Old Clifton Road property they purchased. Interestingly enough the District actually purchased the subject property in 1999 for a rock-bottom price of \$48,000! It doesn't take an Einstein to understand why the District paid such a low, low price for this property. Here is the link to that story:

<https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2017/02/03/how-south-kitsap-school-district-acquired-land-second-high-school/97451958/>

**Here is Chris Henry's Story:**

# How South Kitsap School District acquired land for a second high school

Chris Henry, christina.henry@kitsapsun.com Published 4:12 p.m. PT Feb. 3, 2017 | Updated 4:24 p.m. PT Feb. 3, 2017



(Photo: Chris Henry, Google Maps)

**SOUTH KITSAP** — One recurring question about South Kitsap School District's bond proposal for a second high school is how the district came by the nearly 60-acre site off Old Clifton Road on which the school would be built if the bond passes Feb. 14.

The **\$172.6 million measure** (<http://www.kitsapsun.com/news/local/sk--to-run-another-bond-measure-feb-14-43191e42-26d9-7607-e053-0100007f0870--405368826.html>), on the ballot with a levy renewal, also includes more than \$40 million in **improvements at all existing schools** (</story/news/education/2016/12/26/education-spotlight-sks-oldest-school-dates-wwii/95771494/>), including South Kitsap High School.

Here's the history on the Old Clifton property, according to an **article in the Kitsap Sun from 1999** ([http://web.kitsapsun.com/archive/1999/06-23/0027\\_south\\_kitsap\\_school\\_district\\_buy.html](http://web.kitsapsun.com/archive/1999/06-23/0027_south_kitsap_school_district_buy.html)), information gathered by Superintendent Karst Brandsma, new to the district in August, and long-time board member Chris Lemke.

In the mid-1980s, the McCormick Land Company was developing acreage it owned west of Highway 16, building homes that are now the McCormick Woods development. As a condition of development regulations, the company set aside 20 acres for eventual purchase by the district. The requirement was meant to soften the development's impact on the school district. McCormick Land Company also paid the district development impact fees.

The district didn't buy the land in the 1980s, however, because it didn't have enough students in the area at the time, according to then-Superintendent Bill Lahmann, quoted in the article.

In 1999, however, the district moved forward with the purchase of the **20 acres south of Old Clifton Road** ([https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1fvfAPxCetdFteiev\\_bwiJ3QQjgs&ll=47.50836938075038%2C-122.70928144999999&z=13](https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1fvfAPxCetdFteiev_bwiJ3QQjgs&ll=47.50836938075038%2C-122.70928144999999&z=13)), which it got for the bargain-basement price of \$48,000.

The district received 12 acres at no cost and paid \$6,000 per acre for the remaining eight.

Lahmann lauded the deal. "Flat property with utilities that you could build a school on — you can't touch it for \$6,000 an acre," Lahmann said.

The money came from the district's capital account, which holds impact fees and other capital funding. The land was to be held for future needs but was not large enough for a high school, according to Lahmann, who added the district's goal was to get a second high school in the south end of the district.

District officials were searching for a site of roughly 50 acres but hadn't found one that was suitable, the 1999 article states. "When they find one, the district will likely approach voters with a bond issue to build a high school."

Lemke said the district had been looking all over South Kitsap for a parcel big enough for a high school. The district owned a small piece of land at the edge of Banner forest, which created a focus on the south end for a possible swap, Lemke said. The district was not stuck on the south end, however. The biggest issue was finding a parcel of adequate size.

Fast forward to 2005, when the district negotiated with McCormick Woods developers to exchange the prime 20 acres south of Old Clifton Road for undeveloped, forested land north of Old Clifton. The district sealed the deal after a couple years of negotiations, according to Lemke, paying \$2 million for just shy of 60 acres (albeit without utilities). Although this wasn't the "bargain basement" price of the previous deal, the district got a valuable piece of land for a relatively low cost, Lemke said.

"We got that property for a really good price by the time it closed," Lemke said. The land in 2014 was valued **at \$3.6 million by the Kitsap County Assessor** ; subsequent years show no value since the school district is a public entity and doesn't pay taxes.

The school board, of which Lemke was a member at the time, had compared the Old Clifton property to other potential sites for sale in South Kitsap and determined it was the most suitable piece of land in the best location for the best price. "We did some due diligence before we made this deal," Lemke said.

The district also spent an undetermined amount to address water run-off on the property, making the site "more useable for a high school and future elementary school site," according to Brandsma. Lemke confirmed this, saying the district worked with McComrick Woods, which offered to take storm water off the 60-acre site if the district helped with the cost of a storm water utility on surrounding residential parcels. Lemke said it was a favorable arrangement for the district because it preserved acreage on the school site that would have been taken up with a retention pond.

The parcel was in Port Orchard's urban growth area and is now within city limits. Surrounding schools included Sunnyslope Elementary, one of only two elementary schools in the district that had increasing enrollment at the time.

The good news for the district was that it now had a parcel large enough for a high school. The downside is that it lacked utilities. If the bond passes and a second high school is built, bringing utilities to the land will require money that's been factored into the cost of the 2017 bond.

Brandsma also responded to the often-heard comment that the second high school would be an elitist place serving the well-heeled residents of McCormick Woods by saying the school's service area would include low-income feeder schools. Cedar Heights Middle School, Sidney Glen Elementary and Burley Glenwood Elementary all qualify for federal funding based on the number of students who receive free and reduced-cost lunch (a measure of a school's relative wealth or poverty). In addition, homes in The Ridge range in value from the low- to mid-200,000s, basically entry-level homes.

"It will be a diverse student population as South Kitsap High School is today," Brandsma said.

Doesn't this make you wonder if the District has adequately planned and is actually ready to construct a 2nd high school should a bond ever pass? And what about discussion within the District and the Community regarding alternatives to building a 2nd high school? Will the District ever even consider any alternatives?

All of this should make us further ponder whether or not a 2nd high school is needed that would saddle us with at least a \$180 million dollar debt for the next 25-30 years. And what other schools in SK are in need of rehab and repair? Where is the priority list of these type of repair and maintenance projects? I read recently that the SK pool project has jumped in costs from 11 million to nearly 20 million! And lets not forget how many other recurring expenses that will result from operating a 2nd high school that the District has yet to tell us about.