

EDUCATION

Aronimink Elementary School expansion hearing set for tonight

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UPPER DARBY » A state-mandated hearing for Upper Darby School District's plan to shore up an elementary school will be conducted Tuesday night.

Official testimony will be taken during an Act 34 hearing for the district's \$27.2 million project to renovate a portion of the existing Aronimink Elementary School building and to build a 36,000 square-foot addition. The project will increase the number of classrooms from 15 to 34 and bump the student enrollment from approximately 250 to 700 and include a new full-size gymnasium for youth sports and neighborhood events.

A number of community meetings have been held since the summer to solicit information about the plan.

Tuesday's hearing will be the latest step in the planning process after the district has hosted a number of meetings in the community about this project. The district secured a zoning variance last month from the Upper Darby Zoning Hearing Board pertaining to the height of the addition being taller than allowed for that R-1 zoned district (approximately 50 feet to the maximum 35 feet).

Aronimink is one of three large scale capital projects the district is proposing to ease overcrowding in district elementary and middle schools and to bring students from Walter M. Senkow students back into the district (almost 300 of them are bused daily to a leased school building in Glenolden from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia). A portion of the school building houses administrative offices which are expected to move to a rented office in the Drexel Hill postal section of Havertown about one mile away from the school.

The state's Act 34 of 1973 requires that a public hearing be held on all new construction and substantial additions for certain class school districts. A building addition is considered substantial when the new architectural area divided by the existing structure's architectural area is greater than 20 percent.

Aronimink Elementary will host the hearing at 7 p.m. and it is open to the public. Persons wishing to speak at the meeting will be asked to sign in and will be limited to five minutes when their named is called. Written testimony on the project will be accepted by school board Secretary Craig Rogers until 4 p.m. on Feb. 6.