

**EDUCATION**

# Residents & teachers voice opinions on Aronimink Elementary expansion

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**UPPER DARBY »** The public's opinions to renovate and expand an Upper Darby elementary school were officially recorded Tuesday night.

After months of presentations and meetings with the community, a state-mandated Act 34 hearing took official testimony for a \$27.2 million plan to enlarge Aronimink Elementary School. A complete rehabilitation of the 85-year-old building will increase the number of classrooms from 15 to 34, increase student enrollment from 250 to 700, and serve as temporary housing for the district-wide Kindergarten Center. District administrative offices housed in the building will be moved to a leased space in Haverford Township.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A rendering of the building expansion on the back end of the Aronimink School property.

This is one of three large capital improvement projects the district has in the works to alleviate overcrowding in schools and to bring Walter M. Senkow students back into the district who get their education in a former catholic school in Glenolden leased by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

If the Aronimink project

gets official authorization by the school board, the Senkow students would be housed in what would be the former Kindergarten Center.

Public comments on the project were mostly split for or against, opinions ranging from concerns of traffic and safety and others championing investment to bettering district facilities.

"I think democracy is dependent on an equitable education and right now there are lots of children in this district not getting their fair share because of the overcrowding issues," said Highland Park Elementary School parent Holly Clark who is in favor of the Aronimink project.

Lauren Beth Signore has a child in Aronimink, and she calls it a great school and looks forward to bettering the facility.

"We want a really nice place for our kids to be," she said. "And this place is good, we just want to make it a little bit better."

Aronimink was called a blessing for Don Clark's family and the quality of life for the school community will not be preserved with the new construction.

"What I see with the new construction is pack-



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The gymnasium of Aronimink Elementary School was filled with people in support of, or against a \$27.2 million plan to update the school to accommodate more students.

ing people into a space that nobody is going to grow or blossom," he said. "What they're going to do is stagnate."

Margaret Parenti, a former district employee who has frequently voiced her objection to the project, said she saw a decline in teacher moral and unfortunate learning spaces for students, but focused a lot of her objections around traffic and a decline in quality of life.

She believes her home value will decline and has contemplated moving out of

the district.

Parent Meghan Rubino is in favor of the renovation and building addition, but wanted the project to be careful when dealing with the removal of any asbestos.

The Aronimink school campus is a large swath of green space for the community that hosts community athlete groups and other community events throughout the year. The district said it doesn't have any other pieces of property large enough to do such construction.

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