



The Witherbee Buzz

Newsletter

Fall 2007

The Witherbee Neighborhood Association includes the area bounded by 33rd to 56th and Randolph to "O" Streets

Mayor Chris Beutler To Speak At WNA's 4th Annual Meeting Nov. 1st

Mayor Chris Beutler will join us as featured speaker at the Witherbee Neighborhood Association's 4th Annual Meeting, which will be held at 7 p.m. on November 1, at the Tabitha Lifequest Center. Use the parking lot at 48th & J and enter the door under the big blue sign. Someone at the door will direct you to the conference room.

While this meeting includes the nomination and election of directors and officers, it also is one of the neighborhood's biggest social events.

Everyone is welcome to attend. Free food and beverage will be provided and this is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the activities and accomplishments of the past year, as well as to meet with friends throughout the neighborhood.

The topic that Mayor Beutler will talk about is the current and future relationship of

Continued on page 8



Mayor Chris Beutler

WNA's Reasons Why School Board's Oct 23rd Vote Should Keep Hawthorne Elementary Open

By Mike Fitzgerald

Last month, WNA approved a resolution which stated the reasons below why the Lincoln Public School Board should abandon its proposal and instead keep Hawthorne Elementary School open. WNA has worked with the Hawthorne PTO and the Lincoln Neighborhood Alliance to make these points to community leaders such as the Lincoln Journal Star, KLIN's Roger Larson, and LPS School Board members. Nearly everyone who learns of these reasons says they did not fully understand the LPS proposal and that it makes sense to keep Hawthorne open.

- The Witherbee Neighborhood Association's fundamental purpose includes preserving the quality of life in the Witherbee neighborhood area and pro-

tecting the investment of property owners in the Witherbee neighborhood area.

- In promoting the recent \$250 million bond issue to voters, LPS did not publicize the likelihood that two schools would be closed and Lincoln would net only two schools rather than the four it did promote. Nor did LPS publicize to voters its interest in moving the Bryan Alternative High School to Hawthorne.
- LPS has closed schools (Havelock and Bethany) in the past only to regret such actions. It also sought to close Hartley, which is now used to capacity.
- Hawthorne Elementary is an essential asset to the Witherbee neighborhood area and to Lincoln.
- Hawthorne Elementary received LPS's highest honor in 2006 -the Gold Star Award.
- LPS's proposal to close and then repurpose Hawthorne as an alternative high school would eliminate the investment of time and dedicated resources LPS staff and taxpayers have made to create and sustain Hawthorne's quality special education programs.
- Substituting Hawthorne's services with an alterna-

Continued on page 7

Membership Renewals Are Due Now!

Your membership in WNA is highly valued. Please use the coupon on page 8 to remit your dues. If you are not a member, we ask you to join us in helping to make Witherbee the Best Neighborhood in Lincoln.

About the Witherbee Neighborhood Association

Boundaries:

33rd to 56th & 'O'
to Randolph Streets

Web Site:

www.WitherbeeNA.org
Meetings: 7:00 p.m. first Thursday
of each month at Tabitha Lifquest
Center, 48th and J.

Executive Board:

Steve Schwab, President
440-7630
ohair42@aol.com

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seven_f_ranch@juno.com

Larry Frisch, Secretary
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lfrisch@alltel.net

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karena_ne@yahoo.com

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President's Message



Steve Schwab

It is hard to believe how fast the time has gone by since last November when I was elected president of the Witherbee Neighborhood Association (WNA). At the upcoming 4th annual WNA meeting on November 1st, a new president will be elected and I will become past president of WNA.

I invite anyone who resides in the Witherbee neighborhood, member and/or non-member of WNA, to attend the 4th Annual meeting of WNA on November 1st to hear our keynote speaker Mayor Chris Beutler. We will have food and beverage for those attending. I would like to see all of you there.

Being WNA president has been a rewarding and learning experience that has made me realize that people do care about our neighborhood and that, working together, they can make a difference. As I have said before, strength is in numbers and we all benefit when more become involved in making their neighborhood a better place to live. It is a win-win situation!

Currently our WNA membership total is 67 family memberships or 134 individuals, since there are two voting members for this type of membership. An increase in WNA membership would allow more things to be done by the elected officers and board of WNA. If you are not a member of WNA, please consider joining by filling out the membership application form on the back page of this newsletter.

It has been a rewarding experience to work with Mike Fitzgerald, WNA Vice President, Larry Frisch, WNA Secretary/Newsletter Editor, Karen Vogeley, WNA Treasurer, and the members of the WNA Board (Mary Kay Kreikemeier, Lisa McNeel, Russell Miller, Christine Nesmith, Curtis Wood, Fred Zarate). Without their help and dedication, the accomplishments of WNA would not be possible. In addition, I would like to thank those who have volunteered their time this year in various neighborhood projects that have been done to improve our neighborhood.

Working with the Hawthorne PTO and parents who have their children attending Hawthorne has made me realize how much they really do care about the future status of this school and the education of their children, as does WNA. Keeping Hawthorne open as a neighborhood elementary school has been a top priority for both WNA and Hawthorne PTO. Members of the LPS Board of Education, who are elected to represent the citizens of this community and all schools within the district, will vote on October 23rd to decide what the future status of Hawthorne Elementary School will be. It is being recommended by LPS that Hawthorne be closed as an elementary school and be re-purposed as an alternative high school to replace Bryan School. For obvious and valid reasons, which have been stated and presented to the School Board, both WNA and the Hawthorne PTO oppose this recommendation since this never was presented nor discussed to either prior to the school bond election in February 2006.

Whatever the ultimate decision by the School Board is concerning the future of both Hawthorne and Dawes, it is important that both the School Board and the LPS staff work closely with WNA because their decisions will effect our neighborhood, families and school children. Establishing an on-going and open dialogue with the citizens and neighborhood associations of this community about any and all possible future proposals regarding the education of LPS students needs to be done more so now than ever before.

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Holiday Lighting Contest

It's time to get that holiday lighting contest sign out of the garage, where it has been sitting for almost a year, and into the yard of the first place winner. On the weekend of December 15th, you might win a prize if you or a neighbor nominates your home for WNA's fourth holiday lighting contest. Prize donations have been made by Sips & Subs,



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Nominees must be within the boundaries of our neighborhood which is between 33rd and 56th Streets and O to Randolph. The judges will tour our neighborhood on December 15th to look for an effective use of lights and decorations, creativity and an overall coalesced appearance.

Nominate any neighbor's home or your own by calling Karen Vogeley at 435-6022 or email karenna_ne@yahoo.com. Please leave your name, the address of the nominee and a phone number in case we need to contact you.

All registered locations will be posted on our website, www.witherbeena.org. Join us for a fun contest during the holiday season!

Volunteers needed ...

We are looking for a few more volunteers to help deliver the "Witherbee Buzz" newsletter on a regular basis, once every three months. If you can help deliver one or two blocks in your area please send an e-mail or call Jim at 483-4919 or Larry at 486-9380.

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Marx's Property at 45th & O Street to be Redeveloped

Recently, both a building and non-conforming billboard on the now vacant lot at 4501 O Street were torn down. Stuart Marx, who owns the lot, has expressed an interest in acquiring a vacated portion of Witherbee Boulevard and a 25-foot-wide area in the northern portion of Witherbee park, both pieces are adjacent the east side of his property and would provide space needed for redeveloping the site.

The WNA Board voted 8-0 in favor of this proposed street vacation and proposed surplus property declaration and has submitted a letter of support to the Lincoln-Lancaster Planning Commission.

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Proposal to Close Hawthorne is Puzzling

By Michelle Strand

As one who pays taxes to support Lincoln's public schools, I want to make sure I'm getting my money's worth. That's why I find myself scratching my head at the Board of Education's proposal to close Hawthorne Elementary at the end of the 2007-08 school year.

The Board claims that closing Hawthorne would be an "efficient" move, but their definition of what makes this move "efficient" is unclear. One might assume it means cost savings, but the board was asked twice in public meetings what savings the closing of Hawthorne will provide the taxpayers, and they have been unable to answer. Instead the Board has stated it will repurpose the building, relocate all staff, and relocate all students. Given these parameters, I see no cost savings at all.

A second reason the Board gives is that Hawthorne has relatively low enrollments and that larger schools in the area could absorb Hawthorne's students. However, I believe closing Hawthorne would mean the loss of an outstanding school that exemplifies what elementary education should be. Small isn't bad when it comes to education. First, let's look at Hawthorne's success. Then let's look at what some of Lincoln's larger schools are doing to try to recreate a small school environment.

Hawthorne Elementary is known for its excellent education. In the past few years, its teachers have created a cooperative and innovative environment that has fueled award-winning success for their students. A diverse school, Hawthorne houses an ELL (English Language Learner) program that accounts for a district high 45% of its population. These students come to Lincoln from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances from all over the world. In a typical year, there are 15 different languages spoken at Hawthorne. These ELL students enrich the educational experience of the entire community of learners. Students learn from each other about different cultures in a way that simply cannot be taught in the classroom.

The ELL students have experienced unparalleled success at Hawthorne. With the district's blessing, teachers embarked on a new way of teaching these students. The results on the standard district tests were astounding, blowing other schools' ELL test results away by 20-50%! In some subjects, ELL students at Hawthorne passed these tests at a 97% level! For this amazing success, Hawthorne Elementary was awarded the Gold Star School Award in May 2007, an award given to only one school in the district each year in celebration of outstanding student achievement.



Hawthorne Elementary

If Hawthorne is closed, what would happen to the 100+ ELL students currently there? It is unlikely they will be kept together, and separating these students is just plain wrong. School is a second home and family to these students. The reality is that their success may not be replicated elsewhere, because the program innovations at Hawthorne worked together with the school environment to create the success. That can't just be transplanted to another location.

A problem is the thinking that a small school is not "efficient". A smaller school offers an environment where each student is known by the entire staff, personal relationships are more readily formed and problems can be more quickly identified and corrected. Faculty and staff at larger Lincoln schools have been using teams to simulate a small school environment. This arrangement is has recently been used for 9th graders at North Star High School and for 9th and 10th graders at Lincoln High School. So why has the Board approved the small group approach for use in the larger schools while seeming to think that a small elementary school just can't be efficient?

Hawthorne Elementary is a bargain. It's an award-winning school that exudes excellence and sets its students on the pathway to learning success. As a taxpayer, I am both confused and distressed at the prospect of closing a school that works. Isn't Hawthorne exactly the type of school we want in Lincoln?



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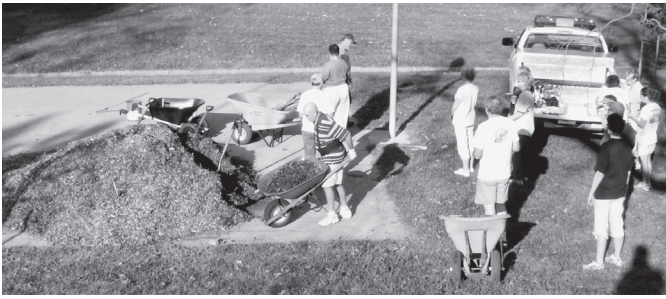
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One of four piles of mulch that were 'handled'



Over 30 hands helped out in Stuhr Park Saturday morning, October 6th. Witherbee Neighbors showed up with gloves and smiling faces to help mulch park trees in preparation for winter weather. As usual, just showing up turned into a productive and enjoyable event! There were several "I haven't seen you for a long time" comments, and lots of "I don't think I've met you. My name is ..."

Most of the sleepy-eyed participants were surprised when a group dressed in look-alike orange tee shirts came running toward them. Were volunteers really that enthusiastic about mulching trees? The unexpected guests turned out to be another volunteer group on some sort of road-rally scavenger hunt. They, and several other teams in similar shirts were sent to Stuhr Park to search for a clue which had been hidden in the slide portion of the playscape. Witherbee volunteers used it as an opportunity for fun and offered to tell where the clue was hidden in exchange for spreading a little mulch. After a good natured chuckle, they were quickly directed to the slide and off they ran again!

One of our newest neighborhood businesses, Braeda, provided juice, coffee and pastries to get us fueled up for our project. The City Parks & Recreation department provided lots of mulch, rakes and several wheelbarrows. Neighbors loaded, hauled, dumped and spread mulch around each of the trees in Stuhr Park and the newly created park area just south of West Gate Bank, as well as Witherbee Park at 46th and O. It truly was a cooperative effort.

"Seeing friends and making new ones is always a benefit of volunteering," said Ann Richards, whose home borders Stuhr Park. "It's really another one of those times where you come home feeling like you got more than you gave."

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Appeal to WNA Residents

WNA and Hawthorne PTO volunteers have been working hard to persuade the Lincoln Public School Board to keep Hawthorne Elementary open. The LPS Board is scheduled to make it's decision on Tues., Oct. 23. and we need your help.

It would help our cause if you could attend to show support for our great neighborhood school. The meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Oct. 23 at the LPS office (59th & O).

Also, if you have not signed the petition to Keep Hawthorne Elementary School Open, please do so by logging onto <http://www.petitiononline.com/hawPTO/petition.html>.

If you have questions, contact me at 416-1475 or e-mail: seven_f_ranch@juno.com.

**Thank you.
Mike Fitzgerald,
WNA Vice President**

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Letter to the Editor

As a taxpayer, I should be applauding the Lincoln Board of Education's proposal to close two schools with underutilized capacity. However, the primary function of a school system is to educate its students and something about this proposal just doesn't sit right.

First, let me preface my opinions by saying that I do not have children in either Hawthorne or Dawes. In fact, my last child will be out of Mickle by the time the proposal to close Dawes would affect the enrollment at Mickle. And I will also admit that I was a member of the elementary subcommittee of the Student Housing Task Force (SHTF). STHF was a group parents and individuals from the community who agreed to volunteer their time to examine the need for additional classroom space and a possible bond for Lincoln Public Schools. The data that the STHF used came from the LPS District Office. This data indicated that an elementary school in the center of Lincoln could be repurposed due to declining enrollment in the area and the resident students could easily be shifted to nearby schools with perceived additional capacity. Hawthorne was chosen because it had not yet been through Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) renovations.

I have recently reexamined the enrollment data. This time I went to the data provided by the MGT Study. This data is based not only on LPS data but 2000 Census data as well. Keep in mind that the SHTF indicated that the desired building capacity for a school is 85%

MGT Exhibit 5-5 indicates:

	10 Yr Max Capacity*	MGT Capacity	Over/Under	% of Capacity
Hartley	340	266	74	128%
Hawthorne	277	333	(56)	83%
Elliott	426	475	(49)	89%
Randolph	442	399	43	111%
Eastridge	284	229	55	124%

*Maximum enrollment projected for the next 10 years.

The above numbers would seem to indicate that Hawthorne would be needed within 10 years of the MGT Study (May 2003) in order to relieve overcrowding at Hartley, Randolph and Eastridge. It is important to note that the Max numbers do NOT necessarily occur in 2012/2013. The primary grade years set the tone for a child's education experience. **An elementary school is probably the last place that overcrowding should occur.**

I also think we need to reexamine the building capacity numbers being presented to the public by the District Office. The MGT study Model A indicates an elementary square foot capacity of 116 sq ft per student and indicates it is based on a survey of square feet per student in school construction recently completed in the Lincoln Public Schools. The MGT report goes on to explain Model B or the Instructional Space Model where Grades K-2 has 20 students per

classroom and Grades 3-5 have 22 students per classroom. Let's examine the differences

School	Model A	Model B	LPS Recent Data*
Hartley	367	266	372
Hawthorne	468	333	328
Elliott	706	475	484
Randolph	675	399	488
Eastridge	361	229	264

*These are the numbers being presented at the recent Public Forums

I find it interesting that Hartley, which is where most of the ELL students will likely be reassigned, has an increased capacity over what either MGT study Model indicates. In fact, the LPS data for Hawthorne seems in-line and slightly lower than Model B of the MGT Study but the schools where Hawthorne would be reassigned seem to report capacity beyond Model B. Hartley's perceived capacity is actually greater than even Model A.

I have learned that Hawthorne is blessed with a staff and principal who have found a way to rise above the challenges of teaching in a school with 15 different languages and not only found a way for ELL students to succeed and excel but the whole school as well to achieve the Gold Star Award Status. My two youngest daughters were blessed to have been a part of the K2 North Program that was once a part of Pershing. One of the innovative teachers on that team is now teaching at Hawthorne. Like the K2 North Program at Pershing, an exceptional program at Hawthorne may soon be dismantled.

Respectfully submitted by:

Wanda Caffrey, Taxpayer
2624 N 70th; Lincoln

Editors Note:

An analysis of the the LPS 9/28/07 enrollment data shows that if Hawthorne is closed, the remaining area schools, Eastridge, Randolph, Holmes, and Hartley will be near 100% of capacity.

These numbers do not account for any additional student growth in this area of the city even though LPS is reporting record increases of kindergarten enrollments.


A survey of Hawthorne area residents is currently being conducted. Preliminary results show that pre-school child population is greater than anticipated by LPS.

—Larry Frisch



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WNA's Reasons Why School Board Should Keep Hawthorne Elementary Open Continued from Page 1

tive high school would not benefit the Witherbee neighborhood area.

- LPS states its proposal seeks to balance resources and needs, and Hawthorne is a need for families and property owners in Witherbee.
- The Witherbee/Hawthorne area is poised to gain additional students from young families replacing retirees or downsizing subprime loan impacted homeowners.
- Small is desirable as evidenced by small group educational instruction programs promoted at larger LPS schools and at UNL.
- LPS is being inconsistent in spending resources to create small group programs in larger schools while also proposing to close a smaller school with acknowledged quality programs and enviable student performance.
- Witherbee and Hawthorne 1940-style community attributes are imitated in Fallbrook neighborhood in northwest Lincoln and in Village Gardens in south-east Lincoln.
- LPS's estimated \$245,000 to \$355,000 savings in repurposing Hawthorn is about 1 tenth of 1 percent of the total 2007-2008 LPS budget.
- The cost for maintaining Hawthorne as an asset to the Witherbee neighborhood and to Lincoln equates to only about 25 cents per month of a property owner's bill.
- The closing of a community asset is not a good thing for students, parents, the Witherbee neighborhood or Lincoln.
- LPS should strive to duplicate and retain Hawthorne's exemplary educational programs, not dissolve them.

Because of these and other reasons too numerous to list here, WNA has requested that the LPS Board reject the proposal of closing Hawthorne Elementary, and by so doing remove the cloud of doubt it has cast over Hawthorne staff, parents, students and Witherbee neighbor-

hood property owners. In addition, LPS should maintain Hawthorne Elementary as one of its brightest programs and instead identify other ways to save one-tenth of one percent of its total operating budget.

If you agree, contact ALL Lincoln Board of Education members prior to their vote on October 23rd, and ask them to keep Hawthorne Elementary open. Be sure to begin with Ed Zimmer, 430-7814, ezimmer@lps.org. He's a long-time Witherbee resident and our representative on the LPS Board.

The other LPS Board members are:

	Phone	e-mail
Keith Prettyman	423-3350	kpretty@lps.org
Lillie Larsen	488-7038	llarsen@lps.org
Richard Meginnis	489-2745	rmegin@lps.org
Barbara Baier	475-7291	bbaier@lps.org
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WNA Calendar

All WNA membership meetings first Thursday of each month 7:00 P.M. at Tabitha's LifeQuest Center.

(Please note that membership is

Not required to attend WNA meetings.)

November 1, 2007: WNA 4th Annual Witherbee Neighborhood Association Meeting at 7 PM at Tabitha Lifequest Center - Mayor Chris Beutler keynote speaker

December 2007: WNA 4th Annual WNA Holiday Lighting Contest- Judging to be done 12/15/2007- Prizes awarded

December 6, 2007: WNA Monthly Meeting at 7 PM at Tabitha Lifequest Center - Update of office building construction at 37th & O by Gregg Trautman

January 3, 2008: WNA Monthly Meeting at 7 PM at Tabitha Lifequest Center- Status report of re-development of commercial property at 4510 'O' by Wynn Hjermstad/Urban Dev.

Mayor Chris Beutler to speak

Continued from Page 1

downtown to neighborhoods. He feels it is an important relationship and will explain why he thinks so.

Mayor Beutler was sworn in as Lincoln's 51st mayor on May 14, 2007. Prior to that he served as state senator in the Nebraska Legislature for six terms, representing Central Lincoln's 28th District, including the Witherbee neighborhood area. In addition, as a development consultant for the City of Lincoln, Chris raised millions of dollars for the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department. Beutler's fund raising work was key to the renovation of the Sunken Gardens—restoring one of Lincoln's crown jewels.

Chris and his wife Judy reside within the Witherbee neighborhood area and are current members of the Witherbee Neighborhood Association. Together they have five children and seven grandchildren.

WNA wishes to thank Tabitha for being a great neighbor and providing meeting space for us each month. We appreciate it.

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