

A Deeper Look at Englewood Schools Ballot issue 3D & 3E
By Englewood City Councilman District #4 – Rick Gillit

As City Councilmember for District #4 in Englewood, I am sending this letter out due to the many requests for me to chime in on the Ballot Issue “3D” & “3E” where the School district wants a cool \$50million from its residents! Please note, I am not advocating a “Yes” or “No” vote on this ballot question. I have never felt that it is my Job as an Elected Official to tell its citizens how to vote on “ANY” issue. All I ask is a true debate and education on the Facts of the matter and let the Voters decide! I believe our Citizens are smart enough to make their own decisions; they don’t need me to tell them!

Our family has Englewood residents since 1980 and a full time resident since 1986. Our Children went to Englewood Schools from Elementary through High School. We were proud that our children did well in Englewood Schools and graduated and are now successful and contributing adults. Now we are being asked to vote yes on 3D & 3E because the School district believes that our School District rating of “11th from the bottom” is due to our “buildings” failing our Children. They want us to believe that new/revamped buildings will fix the educational problem that has been in a downward spiral for years in our city. They believe it so much that they want you, me, and all of our Englewood property owners and Business property owners to foot the bill for this much needed fix of educational decline. Well, let’s talk about this for a moment!

First of all, I and others are struggling with voting either “Yes” or “No” on this. It appears that if you are not public in support of Ballot Issues “3D” & “3E” you somehow hate children, kick little puppies, and are just downright mean. Some, including myself, have been criticized for even asking questions regarding some concerns that need some well thought out responses from those who will get \$50,000.000 from the residents of Englewood in a time where many are jobless, on very tight budgets, and even some barely making it paycheck to paycheck. Many believe, as I do, that our school structures are well aged and do need updating. I continue to believe that we need to invest in our children’s future and ensure that they have a “Safe” and “Positive” learning environment. But, I also believe that aged buildings are not the reason people are not choosing to move their families to Englewood, rather they are looking at the School Ratings! It has been said that almost 35% of our residents that have school age children that take their children to other schools in districts outside of Englewood. I have spoken with many of these families and none of them tell me it is not a “Building” issue rather a “Trust in the quality School System and teaches” as the reason they choose to go elsewhere. Will our School System work on fixing that perception?

FACT - Our Englewood School ratings are very low. When prospective residents with School Age Children look for a place to live, they go to the same place at www.PSK12.com and look for the Ratings of the schools where their children may be attending. These ratings do not tell anyone the conditions of the buildings that the students are learning in, rather the “Outcome”, or should we say “Quality” of that education. To say that our Buildings have failed our Children is a big stretch for me and others. I am more concerned of the “Failure” inside the buildings and in past, and maybe even in some present, leadership.

I know, without a doubt, that our schools have some dedicated Teachers and leaders! I also know that the residents of Englewood trusted previous School Superintendants, Principals, Counselors, as well as the teaching staff to maintain Quality education in our schools. Our School Superintendant Brian Ewert is a Godsend to our city. He has openly admitted that there have been mistakes and mishandling of the schools in the past to get us to this situation. I honestly trust that Superintendant Ewert has our student’s best interest

at hand. With that said, I have some questions that I would greatly appreciate answered so if this Bond passes. Our residents want to know that the money they will be paying for for many years to come has been well spent.

OK – Here are some of my questions:

- 1.) What is being done with the Teaching staff that is not and has not been meeting expectations and was part of the problem that allowed these scores to be so bad? Are they being retrained? “Fired”? Or do they get to continue “Business as Usual” on a free pass?
- 2.) Will they be committed to only Hire Teaching staff that is more committed to their students and their educational growth than their own “Tenure”? Seems like a system where the Leaders/Teachers are not concerned about losing their jobs over poor performance is a poor one. We do not want warm bodies as teachers of our children, we citizens want teachers committed to excellence, both the students and their own!
- 3.) How will this \$50 Million help Math, Science, SAT, & ACT Scores? I know that the district is working with grants to assist with reading scores! Great Job. Let’s hope that continues!
- 4.) How will this improve our low Graduation rate?
- 5.) Do we get a “Refund” if in the future this money and our children’s education is mishandled again?
- 6.) Will the School District give regular updates to us, the “principles” or “Investors”, of our city on the progress of test scores and teachers performance? Business are required to provide updates. Shouldn’t the School District do that as well?
- 7.) Will they come back in a few years asking for money if this did not work?

Out of all of this I must say that I support Quality Education in whatever form it comes in whether Public, Charter, or Private. I want to support what works! One thing that I believe Englewood Schools have done well is the “Colorado’s Finest Alternative High School”! I have been so impressed with the results of that school and its leadership. I have been to their graduations and heard the stories of the students that came there and how their lives were changed. I would totally support them with a different facility. They have been very successful in hard conditions and cramped space. I look forward to them in a better facility however that has to take place. I wish that the other of our schools teaching staff and leaders would take on the same attitude and commitment that these teachers have.

There is a quote that says – ***“Successful People make themselves successful in the conditions as they find them”!*** (Unknown) I trust that if this Bond issue does not pass, Our Schools will still strive for excellence and become successful for both the staff and the Students!

Another of my favorite quotes:

PEOPLE WHO DO NOT MAKE THINGS HAPPEN ARE THOSE THAT JUST LET AND WATCH THEM HAPPEN. Their destinies are consigned to fate, which grants them the life they deserve only if and when it decides to do so. They have little control of their future. by Percival J. Meris

Please allow your vote to voice your concerns, whichever they are!

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