

## Forest Ridge Explained

Come to the first of two public hearings regarding the Forest Ridge versus Rolesville site, which will be held **Monday, June 21** and again on **Tuesday July 6th**. Both of these Board of Commissioners meetings are held in the County Courthouse and start at 2PM. If you wish to speak at the **Public Speaks Out** session, it begins at 3PM. You should be there by 2:30 to sign up.

The integrity of a countywide school system is about to be challenged.

On the Board of Commissioners' agenda will be a motion to approve a new high school. The site chosen is about two miles east of Rolesville—which has the smallest number of WCPSS students of any municipality in the county. **An investment of about \$70 million is involved.**

In the past, site area selection was a non-political process. A consulting group of statisticians and operations researchers at NCSU determined a five mile diameter circle based on forecasted need. The BOE then selected a school site within that circle. This process for the most recent high school yielded a site; **that site is known as Forest Ridge**. It was approved by the BOC and bought by WCPSS. \$2 M dollars has been spent doing the due diligence (determining the cost of dealing with the rocky soils) for the site. The high school has been designed to fit that site at a cost of **roughly \$1.5 M**.

Most importantly, Forest Ridge is the only site where construction can start now. This is important as high school capacity in the northern part of the county is in critical short supply. Wakefield High, 12 miles to the West, suffers from severe overcrowding. It attempts to serve 3000 students in a school designed for 1800. Thirty-nine aging trailers are used along with a "temporary", distant ninth grade center consisting of modular units. Athletic facilities at the ninth grade center are non-existent. Classrooms are overcrowded everywhere. Air conditioning in the older trailers, along with mildew, is a problem. Until new capacity is built, **over 1400 students will be nomads, shunted from school to school.**

The major deficiency of the Forest Ridge site, a major access road (Canyon Drive) through the narrow streets of a subdivision (Chesterfield Village), has been resolved with the selection of a new access road (Leyland Drive) suggested by Chesterfield village homeowners.

The lack of capacity in northern Wake will hinder the creation of the approved magnet program at Millbrook High. Base-load students from Millbrook will need to be reassigned to make room for magnet applicants...but to where? A proposed magnet program at Knightdale would also have to wait.

**When the BOE decided to reject the Forest Ridge site, WCPSS staff estimated the added costs of redesign; trailers and inflation would be over \$15M. Some on the BOE rejected this estimate.**

The proposed Rolesville site is 12 miles east of Wakefield High. Many Wakefield students drive personal cars to school. The schools attendance area extends to the north and west. The many

students living west of Capital Boulevard will have to cross that crowded road to reach the proposed site. The town of Rolesville has 212 high school students (WCPSS 10/09). The proposed new high school would have 2200 seats. The area around Rolesville has the lowest population density for any municipal area in the County. It is also the smallest town in the County.

The sole virtue of the proposed site is its lower land cost - ~\$3M less than the Forest Ridge site, acre for acre. **This savings is more than offset by the sunk, unrecoverable costs at Forest Ridge.** All costs included, the lowest cost site remains at Forest Ridge. Forest Ridge does not require any additional funds to be spent for site preparation. The high risk of recovering the land and other sunk costs from Forest Ridge is eliminated. The cost of additional busing required by the Rolesville site is not included in the “savings” cited above.

The **new majority members promised to promote neighborhood schools and end "forced busing". Yet they have chosen a site that will require maximum busing and where there isn't any neighborhood.** Rather than choose a site that serves the common good, their selection process seems to involve other political considerations.

The majority school board members seem intent on dismantling WCPSS with a “thousand cuts”. Abandoning the data-driven site selection approach for one based on political patronage is unacceptable. Their approach will impact all families in Wake County and cost all taxpayers.