

News Article in *Anytown Gazette*

Former Elementary School Building Has Many Problems

The city council has been approached by a group of citizens wishing to re-model the old Elementary School Building and turn it into a youth center. A wealthy family has donated \$5 million dollars to be used for a project that impacts the youth of the community. The citizens group has been working for some time to come up with a plan and they are expected to present their plan to the city council in the next month.

This reporter toured the school building with Bill Black, the maintenance supervisor from the Anytown School District, and Sam Shields, the Anytown Public Works Director, and Jack Morris, the city engineer. Black advised that the school building has been vacant for 15 years ever since the school district closed it and moved all students to a different location. During those fifteen years, very little has been done to the building. The land around the building has been minimally maintained, such as the grass mowed and sidewalks shoveled. The electricity and gas have been shut off to eliminate fire hazards. Black also advised that because there is no heat in the building that some pipes broke several years ago, flooding the entire first floor and basement.

The fact that there are many areas in need of repair is immediately obvious upon entering the building. Paint is peeling from the walls, the outside windows have been boarded up and broken glass litters the floors near the windows. The gymnasium appears to have water damage as numerous boards have come loose. There is graffiti painted on many walls, presumably done by vandals that got into the building.

Shields advised that due to the age of the building, there almost certainly is asbestos in some of the plumbing insulation and possibly the floors. Black advised he is not sure of that fact as they have never tested for asbestos but said, "I wouldn't be surprised if there was asbestos present." There may also be lead based paint in some areas.

Morris said that the building will have to undergo a significant number of upgrades before it can be used for any purpose. When asked to elaborate, he added, "The building is not handicapped accessible, which is required under current building codes. The electrical system is outdated and in need of replacement as well as the heating system. The plumbing system may be functional but since it has been out of use for some time, there may be issues and need to be a fire suppression system installed."

Certainly the goals of the citizens that are attempting to create the youth center have admirable goals. Those goals, however, may be somewhat diminished when they see the extent of the project they are taking on. Hopefully their dreams can be achieved before the money runs out.