

## **32 Million Reasons Why the *Sensible Solution* Makes Common Sense!**

The *Sensible Solution* table at last Monday's School Board Meeting by David Paterno presents a plan for meeting the educational needs of our community with construction cost that are \$32 million **less** than the School Board's Mega-School option. When financing costs are included, the cost savings jumps to \$42 million. But in today's world of high finance, is that really that much money?

The 12,000 citizens of the Pacific Island nation of Tuvalu would certainly think so. \$32 Million represents over twice their Gross Domestic Product (2002 est), and they have a seat at the United Nations (visit <http://www.tuvaluislands.com/>)!

Did you know that if you take 32 million one dollar bills and laid them end to end, they would stretch for over three thousand miles? In fact, they would reach from New York City all the way to Los Angeles with almost 600 miles left over!

Thirty two million dollars is also a lot of money to the tax payers in the State College Area School District. In fact, with approximately 24,746 tax returns submitted in the district (2003), this works out to \$1,293 per return. Could you use that much money back in your pocket right now?

Using the data from the School District's 11/2005 *Plan Con A*, \$32 million is enough to cover the planned renovation costs for the Panorama Village, Corl Street, Radio Park and Ferguson Township Elementary Schools combined. Alternatively, some of these funds could be used for land acquisition and initial design studies for a second high school. If demographic trends point toward the need for a second school, the District would be prepared and ready to act in a timely manner. If the School Board's forecast showing no student population growth is proved to be correct, the land could be sold for other uses.

Part of the beauty of the *Sensible Solution* is that it will fulfill the near-term educational needs of our community and the cost savings could allow us flexibility to consider a second high school on a new site. By not blowing all of our funds on the Mega School, we keep our options open.

The Pennsylvania School Board Association Standards for Effective School Governance state "*School boards must balance their responsibility to provide educational programs with the need to be effective stewards of public resources.*" In other words, they must demonstrate fiscal responsibility in planning for the short and long-term educational needs of our community. The *Sensible Solution* provides them with an opportunity to do so. If they reject it out of hand, they are thumbing their noses at the Community and its tax payers.

This Monday night provides an opportunity to watch the School Board in action while they consider the fiscal issues facing our district. On Jan. 29, at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room of 131 W. Nittany Avenue they will hold a work session on Act 1 and the financial year 2008 budget. We encourage the public to attend and see how the process works in action. If you become depressed, you can always let your mind wander to the sandy beaches of far-off Tuvalu.



Funafala Beach, Tuvalu