

June 22 Byers & Co Interview

<https://nowdecatour.com/2023/06/22/listen-dps61-leadership-discusses-future-of-dennis-school-on-byers-co/>

Byers, Dr. Clark, & Bill Clevenger

NOTE: These notes have not been vetted for accuracy. Anything in "quotes" is a direct quote (may contain minor errors), otherwise it is a paraphrase. Many pieces were left out that did not provide new or important information.

- Clevenger: "I really expected, probably a little bit more parental involvement last night." Had a lot of teachers. What we would really like to have is not only concerns, but solutions. ... it's more complaints than solutions ... talks about living on the west end & that he has loyalties to dennis
- Byers: Byers talks about the lincoln park plan & how our current knowledge might have changed that plan. Why is there such a disconnect between the teacher's concerns & the keil building's solutions?
- Clark: She describes the disconnect but does not answer "why".
- Byers: Asks if Clark exhausted every option in trying to avoid splitting up the Dennis grade levels. She said yes, basically
- Clevenger: Said the overall reaction was "positive" to the plans was pretty positive. Said there were several questions from teh board & Clark was well-prepared to answer them. He said the concerns were about where middle school kids would go, how did we get here, construction-type questions, questions about timing, what it takes going forward. He talks about the "timeline" for construction projects
- Clark: 6m25s Board has asked me to find more modules for garfield campus. Says cost is about \$150,000 for installation & first-year lease. **Fact check** The agenda says \$175k for delivery+install AND \$264k for monthly lease fees.
- Clark: @ Stephen D, will have to separate GLA kids from rest of school. Says they won't have any interaction with Stephen D students, not sharing buses, transportation, or common areas.
- Clevenger: Byers asked if he has concerns about other school buildings. Clevenger said they'll "really quickly" get involved in a facility study, and that Clark & her team are working on that. --- **NOTE:** 10-year structural surveys are required by law & one is due this year, at least for the two dennis buildings. --- Clevenger says they're in declining enrollment & will have to look at the 5-10 year long term plan. Said DPS peaked at 22k students, was 13 or 14k when he came to town & that it is now 7500 students.
- Byers: says there wasn't much in maroa, forsyth, LSA, etc when there were 22k, that Macon County population has declined. will people leave DPS over this?
- Clark: 9m45s "Unfortunately that is going to happen" and that she is hopeful they'll change their mind once they see the plan. "That building doesn't make you a family. It's what you do with kids."
- Byers: People hate change. You gotta figure out that disconnect. Says he can't figure out why teachers are showing up for public comment asking their bosses "why are we doing this". Wonders why the internal communication isn't better and that he's not faulting Clark or them, but its a strange thing to him. Byers says it is not a good look & Clark says "right"
- Clevenger: ~11m0s Says Clark is working on it, to "try to" ... Byers says this is a disaster/emergency, how do we get all hands on deck & we need to start every conversation with what's best for the kids. Clevenger says Byers made the same comment he made last night that we need to get in the same direction & Byers says "for the kids"
- Byers: Are you worried about the other structures? He says the 10-year thing seems incredibly weird to him when dealing with 80/90 year old buildings. What can you do to make people sure the buildings are safe?
- Clark 11m40s: This year is our year for HLS checks & we've already had notification from the ROE so that will happen no matter what, but we will also do in-depth studies throughout the district.
- Byers: Says there was a lot of knowledge after the 2013 survey of problems
- Clark: Says the report shows damage, recommends a repair, and then you have to report something has been done. She doesn't know what was out there when she was out there in 2013 & that you have to have a plan for remediation by a certain date.
- byers: Lack of parental involvement surprised you ... Were they there, and didn't speak? What did the audience look like?
- Clark: Some were there. We had community members there, union leadership, and staff.
- Byers: You asked people to vote for you (Clevenger). As an elected official, were you surprised by the lack of attendance by parents?
- Clevenger: would ilke to see more parents involved & try to get more electronically involved via facebook & website. Says ppl under 40 interact over internet & will get more participation that way. Byers says "That's 20 year old technology you're talking about"
- Byers: Talks about size & scope & beuaracracy. Says you gotta quit reacting & get proactive about what you're doing in this community. Says "You can't just run from dumpster fire to dumpster fire and then expect people to understand your narrative"
- Clevenger: We need to use all those communication methods to get parents engaged & that staff were the biggest part of the audience
- Byers: it shows you they care, but he still wonders about that disconnect. Says teachers feel underwater & that public ed is harder today than it used to be
- Clevenger: we operate in a different environment today than we did 10/20/30 years ago. Says it's been a revelation to him how hard it is to "move" such a large organization
- Byers: Those parents just want to know those kids are safe and getting their education. It's amazing how quickly ppl will adapt. We don't like doing it, but we're pretty good at it. There are 5 interns through DCLI institute, and change is ineveitable ...
- Byers: Says they're welcome any time, as are educators, union,