

Ever since the construction of a new sewer line became an issue, the City has tried to work with the School District to make sure that the new elementary school would go forward without overburdening the City's taxpayers. In furtherance of this objective, in June, Assemblywoman Gunther arranged a meeting in Albany with the State Education Department, a potential funding source for the sewer line. I was there, as were Dr. Eastwood, Assemblywoman Gunther, Assemblywoman Nolan, the Chairperson of the Assembly Education Committee, and Charles Szuberla, the State Education Department's Executive Director of Facilities.

I felt we had a positive meeting and I was led to believe that the State would be able to help us get funding for the School District to contribute its fair share of the costs of constructing the sewer line. One thing was clear from our discussion: there is nothing unusual, and certainly nothing unconstitutional or illegal about the School District paying its share of the cost of constructing an offsite project like the new sewer line.

Nevertheless, after that first meeting, Dr. Eastwood refused to discuss the matter any further and, instead, told the School Board that the District had no choice but to sue the City in order to make the City's taxpayers bear the entire cost of the sewer line.

Because the City's Mayor and Common Council want the new elementary school to be built, back in October, I made the following offer to settle the District's lawsuit: the City would issue the permit if the District agreed to pay 50% of the cost of the sewer line *if* the City won the lawsuit; if the District won, it would pay nothing. Dr. Eastwood rejected this offer.

Now we face an emergency. The new school construction bids received by the School District, that have been extended once already, will expire on December 22nd. The City is afraid that if we cannot resolve the sewer line issue before that date, the new school might never be built. I am therefore making yet another offer to the School District: The City will issue the necessary sewer connection permit immediately if the School Board agrees to be bound by whatever final judicial decision is rendered and commits to the building of the new school.

The public has received a number of communications from Dr. Eastwood and the School Board that have clouded this issue. It is really quite simple. The City is willing to pay its share of the sewer line whatever the Court might say that is. We ask that the School District agree to do the same. The children are depending upon it and so are the people who need the jobs that the construction project promises.

If Dr. Eastwood believes the District is legally correct, then he should not hesitate to agree with this proposal. The only reason Dr. Eastwood would reject this proposal is if he really does not believe that the District's legal arguments have merit. But Dr. Eastwood should take comfort from this thought: regardless of whether the City or the School District prevails in the lawsuit, and regardless of whether the City taxpayers or the School District taxpayers pay for the sewer line, the true winners will be the children *if* Dr. Eastwood agrees to the City's proposal.