

## Centennial eyes new \$1.7 million administration facility

By Gary Weckselblatt Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 1:15 pm

The Centennial School District plans to spend \$1.7 million for an administration building to replace its problematic home adjacent to William Tennent High School.

The new property, at 48 Swan Way in Warminster, houses a 27,630-square-foot building put up in 1980 by the U.S. government for data processing and computer use on the former Naval Air Warfare Center.

Sitting on 2.8 acres just off Jacksonville Road and near Eagle Boulevard and Street Road, the building has been vacant for about three years and is owned by Industrial Investment Group.

Mark Miller, vice president of the school board, said the price of the Swan Way property has gone down from \$2.3 million since the board voted last December to purchase an "unspecified building" to replace its current building.

"It's irresponsible not to move forward," Miller said.

Not all board members felt that way. In a 6-2 vote Tuesday night, board members Kati Driban and Michael Hartline said building problems at Klinger Middle School, including falling facade, could leave taxpayers with a hefty bill and they were uncomfortable moving forward until that damage was known.

"We have no idea what they're going to find there," Driban said.

"I want to hear what the report has to say about Klinger before we move ahead with this purchase," Hartline said. "We need to do something (about the administration building), without a doubt. But I need more information on Klinger before making a decision."

The current administration building, built in 1951, was originally the Johnsville Elementary School. It needs a new roof and other mechanical fixes that would cost a minimum of \$2.5 million, said board member Steve Adams, citing a feasibility study. A full renovation would cost \$9 million.

"We're well aware of the situation at Klinger, and it's being taken care of," Adams said. "But if we stay (in the administration building) we're going to have to spend \$2.5 million just to stay warm, safe and dry."

"The prudent thing is not to put in \$2.5 million for just a roof and minimal mechanical updates. The point is we're still saving money. It's fiscally responsible to move into a new building."

Said Miller: "This building was a school that we forced into an administration building."

He said the district is in "imminent danger of needing a roof" and they've been getting by with "patch work and Band-Aids." When there's a heavy rain, he said, "buckets line the hallways."

Once the new property is secured, Miller said it's unlikely any move would begin before June, and would probably take place in stages, starting with the district's technology systems and department. He said the new site would have space available for rental to the same agencies who currently rent from the district, including the Bucks County Intermediate Unit and Head Start.