

## PRESS RELEASE

Save Our Schools Committee of Winona today filed an appeal of the Winona School Board's decision to close Madison Elementary and Rollingstone Elementary schools. The appeal was filed at the Minnesota Court of Appeals in St Paul. The purpose of the appeal is to request a review of the Board's decision and the process by which it was made. SOS urges the Court to reverse the Board's action and to order that the closed schools be reopened, or alternatively, that the buildings be allowed to be used in the future for school use.

SOS is very concerned with the haste with which the Board is acting. The Board brought a referendum to the voters in November 2017 for closure of elementary schools and new school construction. Winona area voters defeated that referendum with 90% of voters opposed. The Board immediately turned to a proposal to close two elementary schools instead of three. In less than three months, it rushed a Board vote on the closure decision for these two schools. Now, it has approved a recommendation to sell the school buildings as soon as the students are out of the buildings in June.

Lastly, the Board wants to restrict use of the taxpayer funded buildings by prohibiting their use as schools. This is dismissive of community needs and is based upon a perception that the School District is separate from the community in which it exists. The District must represent the needs and interests all persons living and paying taxes within its boundaries. Taxpayers, who support the public schools, have much broader needs and interests than the District Administration does.

We are appealing in order to slow down the process. SOS believes the board should not rush forward. We believe that a calmer and more thoughtful approach will allow consideration of the broader community interests at stake here. Children do not benefit from overcrowded schools. SOS believes that instead of closing elementary schools, the district should be renovating them, and that we should use our resources to bring the 5<sup>th</sup> graders back to the elementary schools and to expand our pre-K classrooms. We believe that the Board should wait until after the November election to give voters a fair chance to address these issues.