

Madison County Chairman, Others Comment on Edwardsville Bathroom Renovation

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - During the regular meeting of the Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 Board of Education, many community members spoke against [plans to renovate one of the three restrooms](#) at Edwardsville High School.

Madison County Chairman Kurt Prenzler was one of the community members who argued against the renovation and asked the Board to reconsider. While some people noted safety concerns, Prenzler's argument was almost entirely about the fact that the bathrooms will be all-gender.

"A number of people in the community have talked to me about this, and the opinion has been unanimous – people don't think it's a good idea and wonder why this is being considered," Prenzler said. "I'll spare you the details, but people have mentioned Bible verses, natural law, biology, history, etc."

The proposed renovation would create several single-user stalls with floor-to-ceiling locking doors. The sinks would be in an open corridor.

While the district said the design aims to increase monitoring and safety, many parents raised concerns about the floor-to-ceiling stalls. They asked questions about how quickly these doors could be opened in case of an emergency, the likelihood of vaping and drug use, and the risk of sexual activity.

Others, like Prenzler, noted concerns about the all-gender design, cleanliness and sexual assault. Prenzler predicted that boys will choose to use "traditional bathrooms" out of respect for girls' privacy. He also suggested a new design of several single bathrooms instead.

"Edwardsville High School students have won many prizes in athletics and other competitions, but does Edwardsville High School really want to win the prize as the first high school in Illinois with a large multi-gender bathroom?" he added. "Large public high schools can be intimidating, and it's understandable that some students would like more privacy. Another — and less costly — approach would be to construct additional single bathrooms — which provide more privacy — without trying to force everyone into all-gender facilities."

While the Board did not respond to public comments, they talked later in the meeting about different design options for the bathrooms. Superintendent Dr. Patrick Shelton also explained that the Madison County Regional Office of Education requires the bathrooms to have at least 20 toilet fixtures based on the student population and the restrooms' location in the school, though the ROE can approve plans with less than 20 fixtures at their discretion.

The vote on the Edwardsville High School commons expansion and restroom renovation has been delayed until the Board's regular meeting on March 25, 2024. If the construction moves forward as planned, it will be completed by August 2025. Check out [this article](#) on [RiverBender.com](https://www.riverbender.com) for more information about the proposed renovation.

A full recording of the Board of Education meeting, including public comments, can be found at the [official Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 Facebook page](#).