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Seller not liable in private school fiasco

By Brian Murphy
staff writer

The Farmington School District denies responsibility for the fate of Lutheran High Northwest, a building that the district sold last year, according to district officials.

An attorney representing the Lutheran High School Association of Greater Detroit refused comment concerning the options the association is studying for the placement of the students and the future use of the high school.

"I wasn't aware of the zoning ordinance (which will force the relocation of the high school students)," William Prisk, assistant superintendent of finance said. "Frankly, it is not my responsibility to be aware of such zoning ordinances."

School Attorney Robert Kelly took Prisk's statement one step further, saying the district wasn't responsible for the building or student's fate.

"It is really up to the city of Farmington Hills to decide," Kelly said. "The building and site committee just

became involved because we (the district) were the seller."

Lutheran High School officials were scheduled to make a decision sometime this morning concerning where their students will go to school.

Last school year the students attended classes in the former Highmound Elementary School building which the association purchased from the district for \$332,000.

However, the Farmington Hills Zoning Board of Appeals recently ruled the building can no longer be used as a high

school because it is located on property zoned for elementary school use.

Until the city issued a work stop order, a gymnasium was being constructed adjacent to the school, which is presently closed for the summer.

Prisk met last week with the district's building and site committee, chaired by trustee Helen Prutow.

"We (the building and site committee) just had an informational meeting with Mr. Prisk," Prutow said. "He basically gave us an update and informed us that the city has denied the high

school of its gymnasium."

"It is the committee's opinion that we (the district) are not responsible for what will happen with the building, though Mr. Prisk is in constant contact with the school. He is doing so simply because he is conscientious and is offering our help in their appeal."

The school is located in a subdivision not on a major or secondary thoroughfare as high schools are supposed to be, according to Hal Rowe, zoning supervisor.

"There is nothing new to report,"

Rowe said. "The city is waiting word from the Lutheran body about where the school will be located."

The association "will be making a decision in the next 24 hours," Harry Lapham, an attorney representing the association said Wednesday.

Lapham had no comment about what the association plans to do with the present high school site or about where the school will be moved to, but did say that he would be discussing the situation with Herb Moldenhauer, the superintendent of the LHSAGD.

Sen. Ross fights bill's Moral Majority backers

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

State Senator Doug Ross is fighting a two-front war, against both the Moral Majority and a bill that would allow prayer in the classroom.

The bill introduced by Rep. Ethel Terrell, a Highland Park Democrat, is in the state House Education Committee. It proposes to set aside time each school day for classroom prayer.

Michigan's Moral Majority has indicated it will oppose any legislator who doesn't support the bill.

Ross, a Southfield Democrat, says he expects to be one of the pressure group's targets.

"I won't be intimidated by a few people," he said. "I oppose them vigorously."

The basic goal of Rev. David Woods, the Moral Majority's state leader from Grand Rapids, is to organize opposition to legislators who oppose Terrell's bill in all 19 Michigan congressional districts.

Ross's district includes portions of the 17th, 18th and 19th districts where Moral Majority activity has already begun.

"ONE OF THE basic freedoms we have established and preserved in this country is the freedom from government intervention in our religion and our prayers," Ross said.

"Under present law, school boards are free to set aside time for private prayer.

"This bill would have politicians, bureaucrats or teachers telling my child

when and how and what to pray."

Ross was rated in the bottom 25 percent of the state lawmakers last year by the Moral Majority because of his stand on such issues as prayer in the schools.

A different version of the bill died in the Senate Education Committee last year.

"Michigan, despite its battles between business and labor, Democrats and Republicans, has always maintained a necessary civilized approach to how you decide matters of public policy," Ross said.

"Suddenly we have this small group of people who are saying to all of us, 'Unless you do it our way, we're going to throw you people out of office.'"

"This politics of fear and intimidation has no place in this state."

Declining enrollment

Report says high schools, staff are next victims

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Farmington high schools will suffer



Lewis Schulman

their greatest enrollment losses and district-wide staff reductions over the next few years.

Those projections were made by Superintendent Lewis Schulman in his annual report released to the Farmington Board of Education Tuesday.

"Our rapid expansion is over," Schul-

man said. "In fact, the next half decade may see actual staff reductions related to continued decline in student enrollment."

Enrollment which peaked at 16,800

'Our rapid expansion is over. The next half decade may see actual staff reductions related to continued decline in student enrollment.'

—Lewis Schulman, superintendent

man said. "In fact, the next half decade may see actual staff reductions related to continued decline in student enrollment."

Disposal of school property, parent

in 1971-72 is expected to drop to 11,500 in 1981-82. By 1985, it's projected that enrollment across the district will dwindle to 10,135 students.

Because most of the loss will be in

the high schools, the school board has created a task force to study alternatives. The committee is expected to make recommendations in December 1981.

The report failed to say whether closing one of the three Farmington high schools will be one of the alternatives.

STATE FUNDING has decreased along with student population: from 31 to 8 percent last year. The percentage will decrease even further next year.

Increased property values have allowed the school district to continue funding for programs, maintain a fund equity, and reduce the millage levy by one mill for 1981-82.

"Any legislative action by the state to reduce property tax assessments without a state payback would place the district revenues in jeopardy,"

Cutbacks in the federal lunch program will mean increases of up to 50 cents for student lunches. High school students will pay as much as \$1.30 for school lunch, elementary students \$1.15.

The district is reaping financial rewards from the sale of surplus properties, including two former elementary school buildings and two other parcels of land.

In 81-82, there will be 460 general education teachers, 90 special education teachers, and 46 administrators employed by the Farmington Schools.

All except four of the 34 teachers on layoff last year have been recalled. Thirty-nine teachers remain on layoff since being pink-slipped in 1981.

During the 80-81 school year, contracts were settled for the Secretarial and Aide Association for three years, bus drivers for two years, and a three-year extension was agreed upon by

AFCME Local 1456.

A TENTATIVE SETTLEMENT has been reached with the Farmington Education Association, the union representing district teachers. Terms of the agreement haven't been released.

Although general enrollment in Farmington is declining, enrollment in vocational education classes has remained the same.

Farmington schools, with 2,532 students in vocational courses, placed first in vocational enrollment last year among Oakland County's 28 school districts.

"Serious efforts have been made to encourage all students to include development of a technical skill prior to high school graduation," Schulman said.

The 1979 followup study of vocational graduates showed that 92 percent of the graduates were employed in full-time or part-time jobs, earning an average wage of \$4.41 an hour.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Artist at work

Kim Johnston colors a page that will be included in her Safety Town portfolio. To find out what Safety Town is all about, please turn to Page 3-A.

Buying

Find a helpful salesman and plan a mortgage burning

By Bill Brester
staff writer

Owning your own home is an American ideal in spite of rising costs. First-time buyers have a particularly tough time, but many people become homeowners every year.

Why chronicle our experience? We are fairly typical first-time buyers. Moderate income, 35 years old, and not much savings in the bank.

Even two or three years ago, an income like ours almost insured qualifying for a mortgage. But with today's sky-high mortgage rates and tight credit, there are no guarantees.

The strongest factor in our favor was relative freedom from debt. Other than one auto loan, we owe nothing. MasterCard, Visa and the like would quickly go broke if we were typical consumers. Although we use plastic money regularly, the balance is never more than we can pay in full each month.

OUR SEARCH began more than a year ago. We had rented for two years. Somehow our priorities changed from

stereos and new cars to brick, basements and gas furnaces.

We read classified listings and real estate magazines with passion, trying to learn all about finding and financing our dream home. All of the homes listed were about 20 grand more than we thought we could spend, but, heck, what's 20 grand more over 30 years?

We finally made an appointment with a real estate agent. What could he show us in our price range that fit our needs and wants? Not much. But instead of levelling with us, he dragged us around — showing us houses we neither wanted nor could afford.

When it became obvious to him that we wanted to see more than three houses, he backed off. We have not heard from him since January. I'll bet he still waits for a buyer who wants a \$150,000 house and has a 50 percent down payment.

At that point, we decided to find an agent we could work with. We wanted what we could look for. And we wanted someone who would give us straight answers.

We talked with several before we found Terry, who earned our trust through his attitudes and actions.

TERRY SAT US DOWN and calculated what we could comfortably afford.

The key word here is "comfortably." We could have spent more; but clothes wear out, you've got to go to a restaurant once in a while, and cars do break down.

After much figuring, we determined a price range. It's kind of sobering when you see that final dollar figure and the kind of monthly payment that means. It's frustrating when you realize how much more house you could afford if the interest rate dropped to 10 percent.

We considered waiting. Some economists think the prime rate will drop. I think General Motors will cut auto prices in half before mortgage rates will reach a sane level.

Now the search began. We pored over the multi-list books, searching for houses we could qualify for. The multi-list has houses for sale categorized by

community and price. It's fairly simple to find the listings appropriate to your needs.

Each listing contains objective information on the house's features, with none of the puffery associated with classified ads. We narrowed our choices to the type of house we wanted, and the agent made appointments to tour each one.

GOING THROUGH a stranger's house is interesting. You probably learn more about them by snooping through their closets and crawl spaces than they would ever reveal in conversation.

At one house, the owners followed us around, regaling us with tales of grandchildren and retirement. Right, lady — the grandkids are cute, but how about the furnace?

The commentary was so distracting that we left without giving the house a close look.

At another house, the lady of the house frantically cleaned in preparation for our arrival. I safely negotiated the just-waxed, still-wet kitchen floor;

but my wife, Susan, made a rather spectacular landing.

At yet another home, we joked about

including the owner's dog in the picturesque landing.

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FIRST CALL!!

Norman Little was trying to sell his '78 Corvette and had used other newspapers but received no responses. He ran an Observer & Eccentric. Newspaper classified ad and on the first call the car was sold!

Remember, one call does it all!

644-1070

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