

# Farmington Observer

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Twenty-Five Cents

## Eagle parents fight building shutdown

Land value became the focus of attention this week as Eagle Elementary School parents and school district representatives locked horns over the recommended closing of the facility.

A mixture of anger, dismay and reluctant acceptance shrouded the meeting at Harrison High School, which drew approximately 20 residents to hear the Task Force on Declining Enrollments formally make its school closing recommendations to the Farmington Board of Education.

Although parents from Fairview, Ten Mile and Alameda schools were present, the Eagle parents appeared to be the most organized and most vocal in their concern of prospective school closing. All these schools have been recommended for closing by the task force in the next two years.

Eagle parents spokesman Robert Freeman submitted a list of questions to the school representatives foremost of which was the question of Eagle school's land value.

Many parents from the Eagle area believe that district officials prefer to dump that property on 11 Mile, west of Middlebelt, because it is a more lucrative piece of property as compared to other school sites.

"If they're going to spend more time discussing imaginary land values instead of kids, then I don't agree with them," said Stan Freeman.

"I have two children in Eagle. I know they (the board) won't sell the school. No one is going to buy that land," she said.

"Besides, we don't need another shopping center here."

Other Eagle parents shared in the Freeman's displeasure, especially after it was

suggested that Fairview be kept open at the expense of closing Eagle.

"Why should I be penalized because those guys fell in love with a land developer?" said Allan Tann, an Eagle parent.

Some task force members were angered at the attitudes of the parents, criticizing the tone of the Eagle parents' questions and, at the same time, denying Eagle was being considered for closing because of its potential financial return.

"I'M INSULTED BY the witch hunt questions here," said task force member Richard Wallace. "Particularly the ones concerning who did our financial statement."

"I couldn't care less if Eagle was commercially attractive or not," task force member John Washburne said. "If neither building was useful, then the conclusion would be to close Fairview."

"We don't know if Eagle is commercially more valuable," he said.

Fairview School is located south of Inkster and between Thirteen Mile and Fourteen Mile roads in the middle of a subdivision. The contrast between the two schools' locations lead them to suspect the task force recommendation is based on a financial plane.

SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE Gary Lichtman agreed with Washburne and said much more was to be considered besides the land value of Eagle school property.

"I appreciate the reasoned, intelligent questions," Lichtman told the parents. "But, maybe you've been misled. The ultimate decision is based on other things. Among them is the task force recommendation."

"Many schools in the force's report have been mentioned time and time again. The board will have to take a long hard look at all the factors," he said.

Other factors to be considered, he said, are whether other school facilities can accommodate students from the closed schools, whether quality programming can be maintained, and population grows or decreases in varying parts of the school district.

Presently, the Farmington school district is experiencing population growth in the northern sections, while population in the eastern sections are decreasing.

Trustee Mervyn Ross told the parents that planning was difficult because of continually changing factors throughout the years.

"With the economic situation and the cost of busing students, it's impossible for us to take the same five to ten year projection that stood up so well until five years ago," he said.

In 1971, we read projections for 1975-76 but they didn't project the kind of facts that we are faced with today. Instead of declining enrollments, we were shown a stable enrollment that could hold its own."

Obviously, that isn't what happened, he noted.

"It's impossible today to have long term projections as meaning anything of value. Long term plans are virtually an anachronism," he said.

The school board will make a decision on which schools will be closed in the coming two years at a meeting to be conducted in Farmington High School on Jan. 4.



Mrs. Ellen Clisch, a first generation Finnish-American born in the Upper Peninsula, uncovers a tray full of Finnish goodies. (Staff photo)

## Dancing, eating at forefront

### Finns seek out Yule traditions

By HOWARD RONTAL

If you were in Finland this Christmas, eating rye porridge (rice pudding) and you could be sure of getting married within the year. Or if you already were married, that almost would foretell a year of good luck.

If you attended the Christmas party at the Finnish Center Association in Farmington Hills last Saturday night and you found the almond in your rice pudding, you got a gift imported from Finland.

There are about 30,000 Finns in the metro Detroit area (several hundred Finnish families in the Farmington area) said Shirley Kempainen, the manager of the Eight Mile Finnish Center. This year about 500 came to dance, drink and eat the traditional rice pudding, and with each other "Haukkaa Joulua" (Merry Christmas) much the same as their ethnic country men are doing now in Finland.

Christmas in Finland starts right after Advent the anticipation of the coming of

Christ with a day of partying called "Pikkujoulu" (Little Christmas). The celebration at the Finnish Center was modeled after this rite.

On Christmas Eve, specially made long candles are carried to the graves of loved one. After a dinner of "kinkku" (ham) and the evergreen rice pudding, the family sits around the Christmas tree waiting for Santa Claus.

Christmas day is spent solemnly in church and at home. Lutheranism is the official, state-subsidized religion in Finland.

Christmas finally ends on St. Stephen's Day, late in December. Again friends are visited and the children can now put on their new skis and skates.

VALAA TINAA takes place on New Year's Eve. A dipper full of melted tin is thrown into a bucket of cold water where the tin forms a variety of different shapes from which the future is foretold.

"I don't know why they come to this darn thing," said Mrs. Kempainen as she

took in money for drinks. "It's a tradition I guess. They just like to come. Last year I had to turn away 150 people at the door."

From the decor of the hall it was difficult to see what made the festivities Finnish. A large number of covered tables sat around a large dance floor. At one end of the hall green lights were hung behind a screen so that they looked like a Christmas tree.

But a surprising number of couples got up to dance when the band played two traditional Finnish dances; the Raatikko and the Schottisch. Couples circled the dance floor, walking in one direction, sliding in the other, hopping in yet another, getting more graceful and bumping into each other less as the band played.

"Finns like to dance. That's one thing they like to do," said Mrs. Kempainen, not long before she and her husband, Bruce, took to the dance floor themselves. Just as many couples will dance the Finnish polkas as the popular American steps, she said.

There were surprisingly few young

people at the festivities. Most of the crowd was over 40. One father tried to teach his daughter the Schottisch without notable success. They kept bumping noses.

But Mrs. Kempainen does not think that this Finnish celebration will die.

"OUR SINGLES are having their own private party tonight," she said.

"Finns are clanish." Since the Christmas celebration started 10 years ago, Mrs. Kempainen has noticed more and more people, who, as they grow older, find their way back to their Finnish roots even if their families have been in this country for four generations.

They also come to renew friendships begun in "Copper Country," Michigan's Upper Peninsula where many Finns settled. Everyone seems to be related or knows everyone else, said Mrs. Kempainen.

Local Finns like their ethnic Christmas so much that this year they plan to get together at the center for a potluck dinner to celebrate the end of Christmas.

"Haukkaa Joulua!"



Shirley and Bruce Kempainen enjoy a quick fling at a Finnish polka called the Raatikko.



## Lamenting defeat

Although they fought a hard battle, the Mercy Marlins met defeat at the hands of the Marquette entry in the women's state basketball finals this past weekend in Grand Rapids. To see more of the action, turn to Page 3A and the sports section. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

O&E

## School pondered as court facility

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

Farmington Hills city officials are cautiously eyeing the prospect of using the Ten Mile Elementary School as the 10th District Court facility should the school district decide to close the building next year.

Presently, a school district task force is considering a number of school district facilities for closing because of declining enrollments which have been sweeping the district for the last four years.

Farmington Hills City Mgr. George Majoros told city council members this week that some preliminary consideration has been given to using the Ten Mile building.

"The judges have expressed an interest in using a wing of the school as court facilities," he told councilmembers.

"But we feel a feasibility study should be prepared by a professional architect for remodeling and board cost estimates so the school district and cities have an idea of the cost," he continued.

Farmington architect John Allen has been approached by city officials and asked if he would be interested in the preliminary study.

THE COST OF SUCH a study would be approximately \$200, according to Majoros. Farmington Hills would have to foot \$300, or 78 per cent of the study's cost.

Although most councilmen agreed the Farmington Hills administration should probe further into the feasibility of a study, some expressed reservations that Farmington Hills might end up footing the entire bill for the study.

"If we go ahead with this, are we going ahead with the thought in mind that the City of Farmington may not have the finances?" queried Councilmember Joan Dudley.

"I'm just not willing to bear the whole

brunt of the cost for this study," she said.

Majoros agreed, saying that Farmington Hills wouldn't be obligated towards any further action if the City of Farmington didn't come up with the funds for the study.

The City of Farmington will consider the matter at its council meeting next Monday.

## 2 men shoot Hills merchant

Farmington Hills merchant, David Shapiro, 33, was shot four times by two men wearing ski masks, shortly after he locked his store early Monday morning.

Shapiro had finished locking up his store, Tom's Market, 20223 Inkster, when two men approached him from behind and attempted to shoot him, according to Farmington Hills police officials.

After the gun misfired, the two men ordered Shapiro to put up his hands. Shapiro tried to kick his attackers and police believe that he managed to hit one of the men in the mouth.

During the struggle, Shapiro was shot once in the right side, twice in the left hand and a fourth bullet went harmlessly through his clothing.

The attackers escaped south on Inkster.

Police haven't established a motive for the attack and are awaiting ballistics test results to determine the type of gun used in the incident.

Shapiro is in fair condition and improving in a local hospital.

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Due to the Christmas holidays, deadlines for the Monday, December 27, issue of the paper will be earlier than usual. The deadline for display advertising and news copy will be noon, Thursday, December 23. Classified ads can be placed until 4 p.m. Thursday. Our offices will be closed on Friday, December 24.