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Twenty-Five Cents

District eyes elementary facility closing

By LYNN ORR

One of the elementary schools in the southeast section of the Farmington School District will close its doors permanently to students next June.

Another elementary school, probably in the east side of the district, will be targeted for closing at the end of the 1980 school year.

The task force assigned to study elementary school closings and boundaries met for the first time last week, zeroing in on its first task—recommending the two school closings by January.

An increasingly large pupil loss in the district's oldest area, in the south-central, Shawnesee or William Grace Elementary will be first on the list.

And unless further study reveals new information, William Grace, with the smallest enrollment, may be the school to close.

The task force, headed by Larry Freedman, assistant superintendent of elementary education in the district, will hear reports from the Larkshire, Shawnesee and William Grace principals today at its second meeting.

Scheduled for 3:30 p.m. in administrative offices, the public is invited to attend the meeting as the task force tackles the job of closing the sixth school in the district, Freedman says.

Over the past four years, the district closed five schools beginning with Bond in August 1974. Cloverdale, Farmington Junior High, Ten Mile, and Fairview followed last spring. All the schools are used for other purposes by the district, although Bond may be leased or rented.

But falling enrollments, particularly at the elementary level, force the closing of at least two more schools within

the next two years, Freedman says.

"It's obvious we're going to have to close buildings," he explains. "We're sure not going to pick up 1,000 students in the near future."

WILLIAM GRACE, located on Shawnesee east of Middlebell, is the smallest of the three schools in the area, with a capacity for 494 students. Enrollment currently stands at 251.

Larkshire currently houses 432 students, while Shawnesee houses 326. All three schools receive federal Title I funding, under which schools receive funds for students from qualified low-income families. Larkshire, as the newest and largest building, has the best chance of staying open, Freedman says.

"Larkshire, as far as I am concerned, is out of consideration," he explains, although the committee may discover conflicting information over the next few months, he adds.

In the past, committees have been hesitant to recommend the closing of William Grace, despite the student decline. Many students of the school come from low-income families which have a greater tendency to move, thus making the student population more difficult to project, Freedman says.

"It's not happening that way anymore, though, and the enrollment consistently has been going down," he adds.

AT TODAY'S meeting, principals Richard Close of William Grace, Al Langston of Larkshire, and Ron Jackson of Shawnesee will present assessments of their schools to the committee, including the condition of the buildings, how they assess the operation, and projection data for each building.

The three schools are within a 1½-mile radius. If one school is closed, boundaries will be changed to move students to the other schools, which means projecting enrollments to make sure the other schools can handle additional students, Freedman says.

Larkshire has the capacity for 520 students, while Shawnesee could house 494, he says.

In addition, with a change to middle schools scheduled two years down the road, the committee must plan for K-5 enrollment at the schools, balancing

projected student enrollments so students won't be moved to another school in the near future.

FROM A high of about 8,100 elementary students in 1971-72, the district has lost slightly more than 2,000 K-5th grade students to date and projects the loss of nearly 1,000 more students by the 1981-82 school year.

Moving sixth graders' to middle schools in the fall of 1980 will decrease the elementary population as well, while increasing the students at the

secondary level in an effort to fully use the more expensive secondary schools.

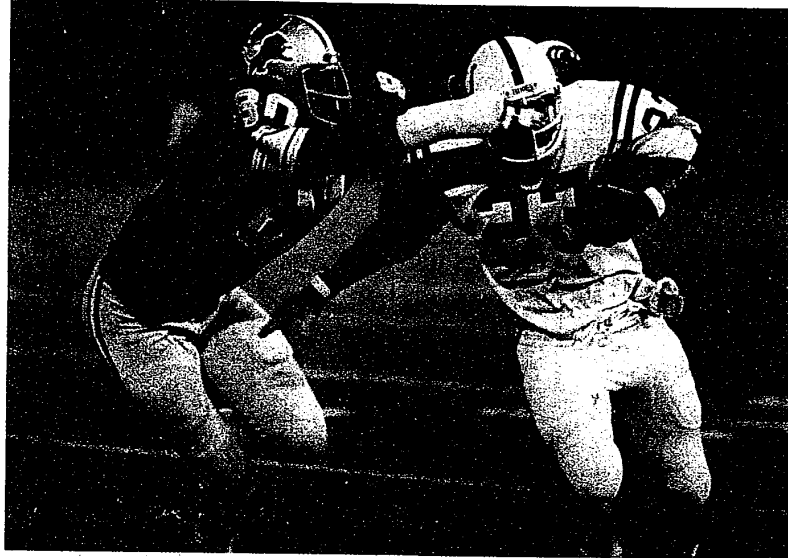
Working with construction projections from the northwest section of Farmington Hills, even the best projections indicate that student loss will continue to decline, Freedman says.

The committee hopes to target the second school by the end of this school year; it's likely that it will be another building on the east side of the district. Highmeadow, Beechview, Wood Creek and Middlebell are likely candidates.

As the newest school, Wood Creek has a slim chance of closing, but decline in the east and growth in the west poses a problem for the committee.

"We're trying to avoid the chance of moving students twice by looking down the road at boundaries," Freedman explains.

In addition, the committee hopes to speak with parent groups to keep them informed of the future of Farmington schools, he adds.



Limping Lions

Budget audit gives schools clean slate

By LYNN ORR

Farmington School District books received a clean bill of health after the annual audit was completed recently. And the board of education accepted official word that the district has a \$434,280 surplus after closing the books on the 1977-78 school year.

Out of a \$27 million budget, however, the extra funds from last year represent only an 89 per cent savings added to a slim savings from the year previous, Treasurer Richard Wallace pointed out. He warned trustees that the financial situation was far from flush.

"It's not money in the till as I call it," said Wallace, a financial expert by profession.

Nonetheless, the money does provide a safety hatch for this year's budget, which was cut by about \$500,000 last February during budget preparation.

The board officially will adopt the 1978-79 budget at a public hearing scheduled for 8 p.m., Thursday in administrative offices at 32500 Shawnesee.

UNEXPECTED additional funds from the state for special education reimbursements, amounting to slightly more than \$100,000, and from investments, and pulling in the best last spring account for the savings, according to William Prisk, assistant superintendent of finance.

But while the district managed to save less than one per cent of its total \$27 million in revenues, district taxpayers found themselves assuming a larger percentage of the cost of educa-

tion through property tax.

Over the past four years, dollars received from the state on a per pupil basis remained the same, approximately \$400 per pupil. Local property taxes on a per pupil basis increased to slightly more than \$1,400, almost double from 1974.

Local property taxes accounted for 74 per cent of the district's revenues, as opposed to about 70 per cent last year, while state, federal, and county special education funding funding declined respectively.

FARMINGTON spent \$1,925 per student in the 1977-78 school year, or the average, an increase of nearly \$300 per student from 1976-77. By comparison, in 1973, the district spent slightly under \$1,000 per student.

In 1977, Farmington spent \$1,650 per student, about \$100 more than the county-wide average of \$1,550. Southfield School District outdistanced Farmington to take the top spot in per pupil spending that year at slightly under \$2,000.

On a county-wide basis this year, Prisk expects Farmington will follow the same pattern when statistics are tabulated. He also projects that Southfield once again will lead the county in per pupil spending.

In the district, spending for instruction and support services, which includes administration, got a little closer to a 50-50 split. Instruction expenses dropped to 57.6 per cent of the total, while support services increased to 41.3 per cent, slightly more than a one per cent change in both areas.

The Detroit Lions limped through the first three weeks of their regular season with a disappointing 1-2 record, losing both home games. A story in today's sports section talks about the Lion's prob-

lems and the efforts of first-year head coach Monte Clark to reach solutions. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

Armchair songsters cut dream hit

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Blame it on four and 20 blackbirds basking into a pie.

That anonymous chef used some daring ingenuity to present a song to his king. It's the same sort of musical gift-giving that prompted young swains to serenade balcony-bound ladies and gave birth to the singing telegram.

But those who want a gift to really warble about are turning to Dan Yessian Associates. The Farmington Hills talent agency will turn a tune to suit almost any occasion.

For a fee, which ranges between \$500-\$1,500, the firm will compose a song on just about any topic, arrange it, round up the proper performers and record it, within four to six weeks.

Extras such as a picture on the record jacket will hike the fee but the entire production is aimed at pleasing the buyer, according to Jim Fiebit, a production coordinator for Yessian.

The vanity recordings, called star discs, provide the opportunity for momentary musical fame via records.

"Everybody has the need to be a star."



JIM FIEBIT

Everybody wants to be somebody," said Fiebit.

The person who will be the subject of the song is foremost in their minds

when the firm begins to work on the project.

THROUGH INTERVIEWS with the client, the composer, usually Yessian, learns about the subject's background. The buyer decides the style of the record and approves the lyrics before recording.

The record is, in effect, a miniature biography set to song.

One of the first songs the firm completed six months ago was dedicated to Michael Gordon on his bar mitzvah. Three minutes, the song celebrates his interests in horseback riding, dancing and skiing. The finale is a musical invitation for his friends and nephew to dance along with him to the record.

Everyone gets their mention in the record. Mom, dad, sister and brother. It's definitely a musical family affair.

Clients seem to be happy with the final results, according to Fiebit.

"They flip out," he said.

It was a mother wanting a special gift for her son's bar mitzvah that set Yessian on the track of the star discs.

Yessian's firm has written advertising jingles for the past eight years. It arranges, produces and sometimes composes novelty tunes such as "Send in the Clones," for Dick Purtan's morning radio show.

BUT VANITY requests are slowly piling up along with the other jobs, according to Fiebit.

Star discs are priced lower than comparable records for commercials, said Fiebit. After coming up with a formula to make the personalized discs at an "affordable" price, the firm offers the service to all takers.

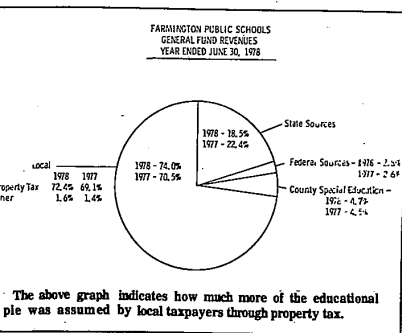
Requests for songs center around retirements and birthdays as well as a few weddings. But bar mitzvahs are the most popular occasions for the records.

"The bar mitzvah market is very competitive. People try to outdo each other," Fiebit said.

Most of the bar mitzvah requests are done in a disco style, since they are geared to a young audience.

"It's what the kids want. They can dance to it. And since we're in the entertainment booking business, it works in well with our other activities," he said.

Since family members and friends



Accident is fatal to Walled Lake man

Farmington Hills police are investigating a two-car accident which caused the death of a Walled Lake man early Friday morning.

Daniel Parker, 31, of Walled Lake died at 7:30 a.m., on the operating table at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills, according to Farmington Hills P.D. Peter Larson.

Emergency medical workers revived Parker at the scene and took him to the hospital, according to Larson.

He died from shock and hemorrhaging caused by a ruptured heart and aorta sustained when he was thrown against the steering wheel, according to the Oakland County coroner's office.

Parker's white 1977 Chevrolet pick-

up truck rammed into a 1974 Cadillac sedan which was stopped for a red light at Northwestern Highway and Thirteen Mile in Farmington Hills.

Police estimate that the small pickup was traveling at the 55 m.p.h. speed limit when it collided with the black and aqua sedan at 3 a.m. Both cars were totaled.

There were no signs of skid marks which would indicate an attempt to stop, according to Larson.

The driver of the sedan, Richard Frukenstein, 42, of Farmington Hills, suffered minor back injuries and was released from Botsford Hospital early Friday morning, according to police.

No charges were filed in the accident.

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YOUR FAVORITE PIZZA

The Farmington Observer is sponsoring its first Pizza Lovers' Contest. We want to hear what you think of the pizza makers in Farmington and Farmington Hills. To find out how to enter this contest, turn to Page 4A.