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Enrollment decline cuts state school aid

By LYNN ORR

The fourth Friday enrollment counts failed to find any happy faces at the Farmington School District office last week.

Although the numbers are tentative, they point to 68 fewer students than last year's total of 12,531, or about 31 students less than projected earlier this year.

"If these numbers hold, that's about \$45,695 less than anticipated," confirmed William Prisk, assistant superintendent of finance.

Those numbers are strictly headcounts, he added, and may change somewhat in the next few weeks. If a student who was absent Friday comes to school within the next 10 days, the district is allowed to count the pupil in the enrollment figures and the important tally for state aid. Special education students are not calculated yet as well, he adds.

The student decline is across the

board, from last year's total of 6,143 elementary students to 5,845, and 7,361 secondary students to 7,009.

The district had projected a loss of 654 students, but although the head count means a loss in state aid, the projections are close to the mark, Prisk says.

AS THE student population in the district declines, the State Equalized Value (SEV), upon which membership state aid is based, goes up, thus lowering the amount of state aid received by the district.

Although the loss in state aid is offset somewhat by a declining enrollment provision in the complicated school aid formula, fewer students add up to fewer state dollars—so many so that Board of Education Trustee Michael Shpiece is worried about being "out of formula" next year.

In that situation, the district would rely totally on local funding through property tax, with the exception of

state and federal funds for categorical or special needs, such as special education for handicapped students.

But the membership allowance in state aid will be lost next year in all likelihood, Shpiece warned board members at Thursday's public hearing on the 1978-79 budget. With higher SEVs in mind, he encouraged board members to refrain from earmarking any of the \$434,000 in unappropriated funds in the budget.

However the additional loss of students may force the board to delegate \$45,700 of that sum to offset the state aid loss, Prisk speculated Friday.

The board will adopt the 1978-79 budget at the Oct. 17 meeting.

THE \$28 1/2 million budget calls for only \$216,000 in unappropriated funds at the end of the fiscal year, projected Prisk. Revenues total \$28,455,761, about \$1.75 million more than last year. Expenditures will eat up all but the \$216,000 in fund equity, the budget projects.

Administration fielded only a few questions from the three-person audience, which included former Board president William Gravius. He asked about funding for energy conservation.

"I agree that it would be wise to save some energy, but it takes up-front money," Prisk responded. A consultant informed the district that with \$50,000, Harrison High School could be renovated to save about \$40,000 in energy costs over two years, Prisk explained. But getting the original \$50,000 is difficult in a tight budget, he added.

He did explain that energy conservation would be a part of renovations made to existing junior highs for the transition to middle schools (grades 5-8).

Rick Ringstrom, executive director of the Farmington Education Association, asked questions about staffing and various aspects of the budget.

Marian McCracken, a Farmington teacher, asked the board if it intended to set aside any funds to begin teaching birth control in the district, now allowable under a new state law.

Larry Freedman, assistant superintendent of elementary education, responded that the district may incorporate birth control teaching in the Family Education units during planning for the middle school transition. Funding of training for staff is not allocated for this school year, he said.

Budget cuts commented on by board members included a 50 per cent cut in elementary field trips, the elimination of girls junior varsity basketball at North Farmington and Harrison High Schools (for lack of interest according to Athletic Director Jack Cotton, and cuts in funding under the federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA).

Merchants mull downtown fate

By LYNN ORR

Both landlords and tenants are concerned about downtown Farmington's future.

But the emphasis on "concern" expressed by some of the tenants rebuts the optimistic voices of landlords in the area.

A little more than 1 1/2 years ago, the Farmington City Council attempted to establish a downtown development authority for the revitalization of the area.

Loudly panned by local landlords, the council dropped the project.

Today, Scott Colburn's Saddlery is moving across the city line to Livonia; the Old Winery restaurant, on the fringe of downtown and much discussed for the past few years, has made little headway toward an opening; and the largest department store, vacated by Federal's last summer, stands empty.

The move to malls has attracted other small businesses, while Herb Shapiro of Belcrest Studio will move his business to West Bloomfield in the next few weeks. He expects a higher volume of business at his new Orchard Lake Road location, he said.

Although many officials, including City Mgr. Robert Deadman, point to an almost 100 per cent occupancy with the exception of Federal's, others appear edgy about the future of downtown. As one merchant who asked to

remain unidentified commented, "I don't see how downtown will make it down the road."

OTHERS such as John Clappison of the Farmington Center Co. and Dave Cornwell of the Farmington Holding Co. dispute that prediction.

Clappison is talking to potential tenants for the Federal's structure, but admits that the "timing" is off.

"They (prospective tenants) want to open in 30 days or wait until next March," he said. Being established for Christmas is the big push, Clappison added.

"I have a feeling that the way it looks, we're probably going to divide the store up. But next week I might come back and have a tenant for the whole store."

"Until you get something in writing, you really don't have anything."

The Farmington Center Co. of which Clappison is a partner, leases all the buildings in the downtown center. The Farmington Holding Co., managed by Dave Cornwell, owns the Village Mall on the southeast corner of Farmington Road and Grand River as well as the buildings housing Colburn's specialty saddlery store and the Focal Point.

Specialty stores and those which lean toward a service do well in the downtown area, Cornwell says.

"People who can lie in a state of a commodity with a special service, like

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A rosy respite

One doesn't have to travel to Europe to see an example of a garden mansion. There's one in Oakland County—Meadow Brook Hall. Like the garden mansions of another era, many people are involved in the upkeep of the hall's five gardens. However, these people, like Arleen Olson

(above) are volunteers. They donate hours each week to keep the 100-room mansion resplendent with fresh flowers. To read about the work of Mrs. Olson, known as the 'Rose Lady,' and of the other volunteers, turn to page 2A. (Staff photo by Mindy Saunders)



There is some progress going on downtown. Here, two carpenters finish up a new awning at Scott Colburn Saddlery on Grand River. More extensive renovations are planned. (Staff photo by Harry Magthoe)

Hills Poles celebrate ethnic day

They came to celebrate a culture that generally receives a mixed reaction.

Some are indifferent towards it while others think it's good for a laugh. But the group gathered at Edward Golota's Farmington Hills home were serious about being Polish.

In a luncheon which wound up a weekend of festivities in Hamtramck the group relaxed over ethnic and American food.

Guest of honor at the Hamtramck Polish Day Parade, New York based singer Regina Kujawa, regaled the crowd but pleased group with Polish and English songs. She accompanied herself on accordion and urged her

small audience to join in the singing.

In the audience with his wife, Mary, was Hamtramck's Mayor William Kozerski. For Kozerski, who saw his city undergo financial problems and an exodus to the newer suburbs, the Hamtramck parade helped bring back some of the good old days.

"On Polish Day we meant to get the residents of Polish descent who used to live there to come back and bring back the Polish town that it used to be," he said.

All ethnic groups should celebrate their heritage, according to Kozerski.

"ALL ETHNIC GROUPS should

wake up to the fact that it's important to promote themselves. There is an awakening."

Arthur Majewski, parade chairman and an instructor of Polish history at Macomb Community College, agrees with Kozerski, that there is a renewed interest in Polish culture.

"The customs are going down. They don't fit into the lifestyle of this country," he said.

One of the reasons Polish-Americans know little of the history of Poland is that the melting pot concept helped suppress different cultures, according to Majewski.

Poland, as a country, underwent periods of non-existence. That situation divided the country into about 150 regions. Many Poles were unaware of their Polish background because the regions were under the jurisdiction of other countries.

Descendants of the Poles who came to America latched on to polkas as part of their heritage. Among the singers who entertained with polkas and Polish songs is Ms. Kujawa, this year's guest of honor at the Polish Day parade in Hamtramck.

The lively entertainer got her start in show business in the musical Pins and Needles, produced by the Ladies German Workers Union.

"I DANCED, sang and acted in that," she said. "We traveled all over the United States until the play was sold to Universal studio."

In 1957-59, Mrs. Kujawa was one of a two-person polka show in Brooklyn, New York.

"We did everything. We sold shoes; we sold kielbasa, and I modeled on the

program," she said.

Today, she is a spokesperson for Allied Chemical, Western Electric and Union Carbide. She also keeps club dates and records.

"I make them happy," she said of her audience.

Her recordings of Polish songs and polkas were made with an investment from her and her band.

"There is definitely a big market for the songs," she said. When you have a good song and good people on a record, then people will buy," she said.

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LIBRARY LINES

Don't let the cold weather that's creeping up on Michigan make you depressed. The Farmington Library system has plenty of activities to offer for both young and old in October. To see what's going on at their two locations, turn to Library Lines on Page 5B.

Meet the Observer

Time's running out.

The Farmington Observer's public relations seminar is scheduled for 8 p.m., Thursday in the Farmington Hills Community Library, Twelve Mile west of Orchard Lake Road.

That's when the Farmington Observer staff will have a chance to meet and greet its guests.

Beginning with an introduction to the staff, we'll give you the insider's view of what it's like to bring you hometown news.

Persons in charge of their organization's publicity campaigns can use the seminar to pick up tips on getting their releases printed. It will also give them a chance to establish a personal contact with the newspaper.

Persons interested in attending can

call office receptionist Gail Elford at 233-8400 from 8:30 a.m. noon and from 1:30 p.m.

She'll be glad to register you for the free seminar.

Leave your phone number and tell us if you represent a group. We would appreciate knowing how many persons will be in your party so we can arrange for refreshments.

Leading the discussion will be Farmington editor Steve Barnaby, accompanied by reporters Louise Okrutsky, Lynn Orr and Suburban Life editor Loraine McGlash.

PHOTOGRAPHER Harry Maubue and Ms. Elford will be there too. So don't wait until the last minute. Register now for the seminar.