

Shiawassee targeted

District eyes closing school

By MARY GNIEWEK

The Farmington Board of Education is slated to approve the closing of another elementary school tomorrow night because of declining district enrollment and the proposed phase-in of a middle

school format by the 1980-81 school year.

Shiawassee is expected to join Cloverdale, Bond, Farmington Junior High, Ten Mile and Fairview schools—all victims of declining enrollment. Current student enrollment is 13,272, but pro-

jections indicate an enrollment drop to 10,717 by 1980-81.

School Supt. Lewis Schulman said the district will lose 1,780 elementary school students over the next three years because of the new system. The middle school format takes sixth graders out of the elementary level and puts them in with seventh and eighth grade students. Ninth graders will move to the high school level.

Implementation of the middle school was approved by the district following an intensive year-long study by a task force comprised of parents and administrators. Some experts believe middle schools would be less expensive and result in a better use of space.

"The plan is to close one school a year," Schulman said, adding that the current closing is expected to save the district \$175,000.

"Our budget may be cut next year and we might have to close two schools. We hope we don't have to do this. School closings up set neighborhoods."

CURRENTLY, SCHULMAN SAID, the east end of the district that includes all of Farmington, Farmington Hills and a portion of West Bloomfield is experiencing a greater decline than the west end.

"We have a sophisticated, well-informed electorate. It is not our intention to shock or surprise anyone. Resi-

dents will be notified of closings well in advance.

"The district has two choices. It can keep all the schools open and run an inefficient operation. Programs would suffer," he said. "Or we can maintain quality programs by being efficient and prudent."

The superintendent believes declining enrollment is not a temporary problem because it corresponds with a steady decline in the birthrate statewide.

"It's highly unlikely we'll experience a dramatic upturn. But we can turn the continued drop to our advantage with things like reduced class size."

State aid is contingent on student enrollment. This year, the district had to trim \$560,000 out of its \$28,276,079 budget. Cuts were made in capital maintenance, staff positions and athletics.

"We were able to weather the cuts without affecting major programs, some of the cuts have even been restored," he said. "This has been a good year. We balanced the budget and got approval for a \$2 million bond issue that enabled us to make improvements long overdue."

The district has scheduled an election Feb. 13 in which voters will be asked to approve a 1.75 mill renewal for nine years. Schulman said it would bring over \$1 million into the district.



PAUL DIBLASI

Cellist featured at concert

The first Oakway Symphony concert of the new year will spotlight a young cellist whose career goal is to "play as much and as varied types of music as possible."

Concert-goers will hear Paul DiBlasi, 22, perform Brahms' Double Concerto for violin and cello with Isidor Saslav on Feb. 11 at Southfield-Lathrup High School.

DiBlasi, a former Livonia resident, is studying cello performance at Indiana University. He was principal cellist with Oakway for three years before transferring to school outside. This will be his second solo performance.

"This is the last of Brahms' concertos and one of his most played pieces. The first movement is dynamic, the second is warm, expressive. The third and final movement in the 50-minute piece is folksy, gypsy style," DiBlasi explained.

The musician played trumpet for seven years before switching to the cello seven years ago.

"I'M OVERWHELMED BY the complexity of the cello. There is so much involved. The instrument has a small repertoire, but I transcribe other pieces of music for the cello."

DiBlasi said he has transcribed piano written by Chopin and played them on his cello.

His musical career is well grounded in his family background. Father, Francesco DiBlasi, is Oakway's musical director and conductor. His mother, Nelda, was a voice teacher in the Detroit Public Schools. His sister, Fran, manages an orchestra in Boston.

DiBlasi has performed with the Jewish Center Orchestra, Orchestre de la Ville de Paris and was principal cellist in a student program at Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony.

He'll be sharing the spotlight next month with Saslav, who is concertmaster of the Baltimore Orchestra, and has held the same position with the Buffalo and Minneapolis Orchestras.

DESPITE TRAINING in serious music, DiBlasi is also a fan of popular music and such contemporary artists as Carly Simon.

A graduate of Bentley High School, he attended the University of Michigan and Wayne State before transferring to Indiana. Now he studies with cellists Joseph Gingold, Fritz Magg and Jan Starker.

The concert will be Feb. 11 at 3 p.m. at Southfield-Lathrup, Twelve Mile west of Southfield. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$2 for students and senior citizens and are available at Hud son's, Madonna College and Hammill Music. Call 425-8618 for more information.

McConnell endorsed for state position

A resolution to recommend Oakland County Commissioner Robert McConnell (R-25th District) to the new state transportation commission was endorsed by six of seven members of the West Bloomfield Township Board last week.

West Bloomfield Trustee Weldon Yeager announced he was voting against the endorsement of McConnell because he is a candidate, too.

"The governor has about 100 names. Besides, I don't think the resolution will make any difference," Yeager said.

According to State Rep. Richard Fessler (R-Union Lake), the governor will decide on the three remaining appointments to the commission by Jan. 15.

McConnell, of Farmington Hills, is commissioner for the southwestern portion of West Bloomfield included in the 25th District.

Supervisor John Doherty added that Novi and Commerce Township asked West Bloomfield to support McConnell, an active participant in the controversial M-275 project.

West Bloomfield officials have long supported the M-275 highway through western Oakland County and the extension of Northwestern Highway where it would connect with M-275 as the only cure for local traffic problems.

Robbery greets vacationers

Police are still investigating a robbery which netted thieves about \$7,200 in collectors items and cash over the New Year's holiday.

Leonard Novotny, of Cass, told police his home was broken into sometime between Dec. 26 and Jan. 2, while he and his family were on vacation.

The thieves entered the home by shouldering in a dead bolt on the basement door, according to Farmington police. A sterling silver serving set consisting of 186 pieces, valued at \$2,300, was missing along with \$1,900 in jewelry and \$3,000-\$5,000 in foreign currency and bank notes of various denominations. In addition, the thieves took \$32 in cash from the home.

The home was left in shambles, according to police. The amount of damage to the home and the number of items taken suggest to police that more than one person was involved in the robbery.

Stunted freeway plan gets step closer to reality

By JACKIE KLEIN

The long-delayed western leg of the I-696 freeway through South Oakland County may be under construction in a year.

That's the optimistic estimate of State Rep. Joseph Forbes (D-Oak Park), whose district includes Southfield and Lathrup Village.

The final environmental impact statement for the eight-mile segment of the proposed expressway from Lahser in Southfield to I-75 in Madison Heights still awaits federal approval.

"I expect it will take six months for the planned western link of I-696 to get off center in Washington," Forbes said. "If all goes well, construction should begin in a year and be completed by 1988."

Now that the 10-mile long eastern

leg of I-696 connecting I-75 with I-94 in Roseville has been opened, at least temporarily, the Michigan Department of State Highways will press for completion of the western leg, Forbes said.

Forbes and state highway officials have been meeting with Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, who is concerned about the effect of the proposed freeway on the Detroit zoo in Royal Oak and recreation areas in Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge and Huntington Woods.

"AFTER TWO years of research by the Michigan Environmental Protection Agency, it was determined that the proposed freeway won't be detrimental to the animals in the Detroit Zoo," Forbes maintained.

"In the summer when the zoo opens, thousands of motorists from the east side will create a tremendous traffic

problem on Ten Mile because of the missing western link of I-696."

The re-designed expressway route will avoid the necessity of taking property from Rackham Golf Course in Huntington Woods, which was another area of concern, Forbes said.

The Federal Highway Department has given Detroit veto power over the proposed I-696 route, Forbes said. Other stumbling blocks could include lawsuits by Lathrup Village and Pleasant Ridge against the planned freeway course.

Forbes, however, said he is optimistic that Young will agree to the connection between I-75 and I-696, and that the legal hassles will have no effect on the timetable for construction of the freeway.

"Land in Pleasant Ridge has already been condemned and purchased by the highway department to make way for the expressway," Forbes said. "Oak Park and Royal Oak Township will be more affected than Southfield which has a lot of open area along the proposed freeway route."

ROGER SMITH, Southfield public services director, said he expects federal approval of the proposed I-696 route within three months. When the expressway was first on the drawing boards about 20 years ago, the estimated cost was \$20 million a mile, Smith said. The cost has skyrocketed to \$50 million a mile.

The section from I-96 in Novi east to Telegraph in Southfield was completed two years ago. The I-696 east-west expressway is expected to carry 150,000 cars a day in Southfield, Smith said.

Police ram car during chase

Farmington police rammed into a stolen car recently in order to recover it.

The car, a 1972 gold Plymouth Duster owned by Richard Dery of Royal Oak, was reported stolen in Novi Dec. 23. That evening, Farmington Officer Anthony Gubbac spotted the car as he patrolled Nine Mile and Farmington Road.

The Duster was in the eastbound lane of Nine Mile. Gubbac gave chase and hit the car on the passenger side. The car slid onto the side of Farmington Road north of the Kensington Manor

apartments.

Gubbac decided to ram the car because it was traveling at a fast and reckless pace, according to Farmington Officer Peter Amato.

The driver of the car, William Olsen, 17, of Novi, was charged with theft. After his arraignment in front of Judge Margaret Schaeffer in 47th District Court, Olsen was placed under \$1,500 bond and held at Oakland County Jail. Two passengers in the car were identified as runaways from Boys' Training Center in Whitmore Lake. No one was injured when the car was rammed.

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

TALK BACK TO MA BELL when the Public Service Commission and Michigan Department of Commerce conduct a public hearing on Bell's proposed rate increase. Bell is asking the commission for about \$234 million more in annual revenues over a two-year period. The company proposes to increase its rates by \$142 million in 1979 and about \$92 million more in 1980. The company says that charges for basic residential and business service won't increase until September 1979. Bell also requested immediate interim rate relief amounting to \$42 million. One of the public hearings will be conducted at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 28, in room 306, building J of Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills.

Another hearing for the introduction of evidence and cross examination of company witnesses will begin at 9:30 a.m., March 5, in the offices of the commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, Lansing. Persons wishing to testify at this hearing must file a petition to intervene with the commission by Feb. 1.

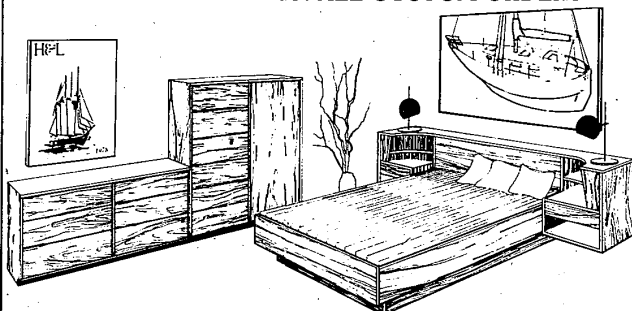
THE METROPOLITAN HIGH SCHOOL Mathematics Club will conduct a general meeting at 7 p.m.,

Jan. 11, at Lawrence Institute of Technology, 2100 W. Ten Mile, Southfield. A social mixer, featuring mathematics movies, will follow the meeting. The club is open to all interested high school students faculty and parents from the Detroit metropolitan area. There are no dues and members have access to L.I.T. computer facilities without charge. Particularly popular is the club's ongoing Computer Battleship competition. Meetings are conducted in room 321 of the Science Building.

FINDING MONEY will be the topic of the L.I.T. School of Business and Management seminar in January. The seminar, How to Find Dollars for Growth, is aimed at helping small businessmen find funds. Sessions will be from 7-10 p.m., Jan. 11, 15, 17 and 23. Thomas Stevens a vice-president in the commercial and industrial loan area for Michigan National Bank, will head each session. Cost for the noncredit seminar is \$15 per person which covers the instruction and materials and supplies. All sessions will be conducted at L.I.T., 21000 W. Ten Mile, near Northwestern Highway in Southfield. To register, call Dean Lahr's office at 356-0200. Registration must be received by the day preceding the desired seminar date.

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