

# District backs off on proposal to close 2 schools

By Phil Jerome  
Novi-Walled Lake News

Union Lake Elementary will be the only school to close next year in the Walled Lake School District.

The school board voted 6-1 last week not to close other elementary schools despite a projected \$3.2 million deficit and declining enrollment. Trustee Janet Callahan cast the dissenting vote.

At least two other elementaries,

Decker and Oakley Park, were being considered for closing.

The board also voted not to close any elementary school to convert it to an administration building.

By voting not to close a second elementary school during the 1982-83 school year, the board accepted the recommendation of a three-member board committee of Patricia Jackman, Mario Tozzi and Robert Cooper.

The committee also recommended the board continue to study the possibility of closing another elementary school and reach a decision by late fall.

"We felt the decision (to close another school) was too rushed and that there is need for additional information," said Cooper in announcing the committee's recommendation.

Callahan strongly criticized the committee's recommendation to continue studying the school closing issue.

Nothing that parents have been upset over the possibility that either Decker

or Oakley Park might be closed, Callahan said the rest of the board "succumbed in dividing a community, creating a lot of dissension and pitting neighborhood against neighborhood."

The recommendation merely extends the situation, she said.

ALTHOUGH FINAL state equalized valuation figures are unavailable, the district anticipates a \$3.2 million budget deficit for the 1982-83 school year. Closing an elementary school would save \$150,000.

Added to the district's budget problems is a sharp decline in enrollment over the past six years. Some 11,600 students were enrolled in the district during 1976-77. The official 1981-82 count has dropped to 9,600.

A further decrease of 400 students is projected for 1982-83.

Parents jammed last week's board meeting to express a variety of con-

cerns. Although some parents asked the board to pledge that no more schools will be closed, board president Kenneth Tucker balked at the suggestion.

"If we don't have the enrollment, it's an added cost to attempt to keep the building open," he said.

While most parents were pleased no more schools would be closed next year, others related the decision to the financial situation.

Laura Franz, president of the Walled Lake School Secretaries Association, asked if the board will cut additional programs and personnel to make up for the \$150,000 that might have been saved by closing another school.

Pat Bell, a parent and substitute teacher, said she hoped parents would show the depth of concern for a tax increase that will retain staff and programs as they had over the proposal to close another school.

Thomas Thornton, a parent, asked the board to consider asking voters for a tax increase before voting to close any more schools.

"You should give us the option of approving additional millage before you start closing schools and chopping programs. Let us decide," he said.

## Truman award is granted

Thomas J. Sugrue, son of Mr. and Mrs. T.J. Sugrue of Farmington Hills, has been awarded a Harry S. Truman Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded for academic excellence and leadership ability and offers \$5,000 a year for four years, including graduate studies.

Sugrue is a 1980 graduate of Brother Rice High School and is a sophomore at Columbia University, New York City, majoring in history and is an all-A student.

He graduated from high school with honors, achieving an Alliance Francaise Award, William Randolph Hearst Scholarship and Brother Rice High School awards for excellence in French and publications.

As a Phi Beta Kappa student, he was a member of the National Honor Society and served as editor of his school paper, as well as being nationally recognized in "Who's Who, 1980 High School Graduates."

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## Neighbors upset with game parlor

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THE VIEW that higher fees should be charged to cover policing of game parlors has been struck down in federal court, according to Ronald Walker, of Birmingham Birmingham, owner of Walker's Pinball in Warren. Walker,

has made a point of becoming well-versed in arcade legislation because of fights he's had with local authorities.

"It's no tougher to write a license for a pinball machine than it is to write one for a cigarette machine," Walker said.

"A police department budget must,


by constitutional law, be paid out of the general fund," Walker said. "And licensing can't be used to increase the general fund. The next thing that'd happen is certain community groups would volunteer to pay more for extra police protection, and there wouldn't be adequate police protection in the poor end of town."

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