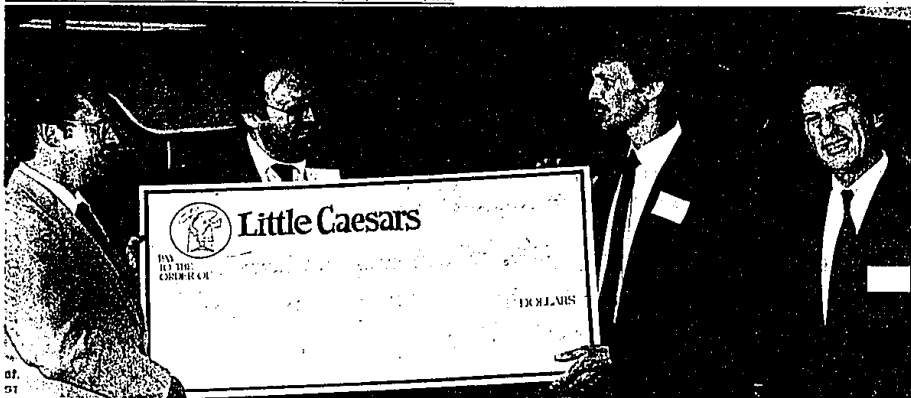




Pizza man donates dough

Little Caesar Enterprises Inc. contributed \$400 to the Farmington Community Library. The pizza-making company celebrated the opening of the 400th location in the chain. The donation will be used to strengthen the community's access to nutritional information. Re-

ceiving the check are G. Gordon Lewis, library director, and Charles Williams, Farmington Hills mayor pro-tem. Company Senior Vice President Edward Marklow and President Michael Illich presented the check.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Walled Lake District looks at budget cuts

By Patricia N. Bowling
Novi-Walled Lake News

Walled Lake's Board of Education last week publicly uncovered details of the district's financial position. It attempted to show that anything less than a 12.1 percent reduction in teacher salaries this year will devastate the district.

The financial data was presented at the first fact-finding hearing on Sept. 13, under the direction of Barry Brown of the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC).

The teachers union, represented by Karen Filar and Gerald Haymond of the Michigan Education Association (MEA), has proposed a salary freeze in 1983-84, but wants a 7 percent salary increase in 1984-85 and a 9 percent increase in 1985-86.

Throughout her presentation, board negotiator Rita Thomas maintained that Walled Lake students already have been affected by program and staff reductions and further reductions will gut the district's academic enrichment programs, including sports, music and all extracurriculars.

"THIS YEAR, labor peace will only be gained if the teachers join in the board goal to maintain educational integrity in programs provided Walled Lake school children," Thomas said.

Walled Lake taxpayers, with low per capita income and high unemployment, are taxed at a higher rate than surrounding districts, Thomas said. Because the district lacks tax income from industry or highly valued property, local taxpayers bear the burden of school funding, she said.

The average salary for a Walled Lake teacher is more than \$30,000 annually. The average salary for teachers in Michigan is about \$23,900, and Michigan teachers are the sixth highest paid in the nation, according to 1982-83 National Education Association statistics.

The district has no teachers on the starting salary schedule and only 15 of 474 teachers have less than five years' experience, Thomas said. The district has 259 teachers with master's degrees and six with doctorates. More than half of the district's teachers are on the top of the salary schedule, which explains why the average salary in the district is high, she said.

Without the board's proposed 12.1 percent wage cut, Superintendent Don Sheldon has suggested possible reductions in the following programs, services and personnel:

- Elimination of elementary reading support program.
- Elimination of elementary guidance.
- Complete shut down of Outdoor Education Center.
- Fifty percent reduction of winter and spring extracurricular and athletic activities.
- Eliminate audio/visual program.
- Cut one senior high counselor from each high school.
- Eliminate psychologists and social workers.
- Eliminate special education aides.
- Eliminate director of secondary education.
- Reduce busing services.
- Reduce fund balance (salary) 50 percent.

THE TOTAL savings from these cuts, after accounted for unemployment for laid off employees, is about \$805,000.

Other suggested cuts include reducing elementary teaching staff by 15 positions, which would increase class size to an average 27 1/2 students. The elimination of elementary instrumental music, general music, art and physical education programs also has been suggested.

"What the board is saying is that these cuts are not acceptable," said the assistant superintendent for business, Russell Wright, in his explanation of the cuts at the Sept. 13 hearing. "According to the board, any further reductions will be detrimental to our students."

Other alternatives to reductions include increasing the elementary class size average from 25 students to 30 or 35. Staffing could be reduced by 30 to 50 positions, with an estimated cost savings of up to \$1.2 million.

The union has not addressed the impact of such cuts on the district, although spokespersons have said the union would prefer layoffs to salary cuts.

"We maintain the request for a 12.1 percent salary reduction is unreasonable and borders on the ludicrous. More realistic budgeting with a millage to match, we feel, would be a much more responsible method of curing the ill the board foresees," Haymond said at the fact-finding hearing.

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