

# Resident reaction grows to Walled Lake layoff

By Patricia M. Gowing  
Novi-Walled Lake News

Mothers marched outside the Walled Lake school administrative offices last week carrying picket signs and passing out leaflets.

Their message: "WLEA versus Board, students lose."

The same message was communicated at a raucous meeting of the Board of Education last week.

At the meeting, the board ratified a contract agreement with the teachers' union, ending a strike. After ratification, the board voted to lay off 90 teachers to help cope with the district's financial problems.

Many residents at this meeting, however, did not approve of the board's decision.

At one point during the 3½-hour session, nearly 600 parents, students and

teachers crowded the Walled Lake Western High School Auditorium.

When parents felt they might not have their say during audience participation, the crowd became unruly, with some shouting obscenities at the board.

"WE VOTED you in and you're going to listen to us. We voted you in and we'll vote you out, by God," bellowed one woman, who was later asked to leave by Board President Mario Tuzi.

Resident Steven Hall accused the trustees of "arguing so consistently among themselves they've never developed an education philosophy."

"No wonder you can't pass a millage. You've never explained what a millage was for," he claimed. Hall advised operating the district on a deficit budget to avoid laying off teachers.

"It may bring us to the wire financially, but we're already at the wire ac-

ademically and at the wire in terms of community support. I hope you don't fire those 90-80 teachers because if you do, you will break the back of your educational program."

THE MOTHER of a Gilegry Elementary School first grader told the board she would be willing to triple her taxes to support the school system, while another parent offered volunteer help in her daughter's kindergarten room.

Walled Lake Central High School senior Kurt Langdon told the board some of the teachers that would be cut because of their low seniority, "may be our best teachers." Langdon predicted the staff layoffs would contribute to an increase in high school dropouts.

"I pity my sister who's in the eighth grade. She won't have the full program I had," he said. "The students are paying for the mismanagement of the board."

A Walled Lake Western High School student told the board classrooms with 40 or more students would hinder learning.

"I just don't understand how we can possibly have a teaching/learning situa-

tion with 40 plus students in a classroom," she said.

ANOTHER WESTERN student said that "everybody seems to be blaming everybody. Maybe if we'd stick together something can be done."

Greg Pollis, captain of the Western football team, told the school board his most valuable classes were college preparatory. Although he loves football, Pollis said he would prefer that be cut over the teachers that affect his college plans. "My education is first, then sports," he said.

Following the announcement of contract ratification and the listing of staff layoffs, the board again subjected themselves to the abuse of the audience.

However, Superintendent Don Sheldon prefaced the second round of audience participation, by noting that many individuals had been "dealing with misinformation or gross lack of information."

Although admitting the district has not had a good public relations effort, Sheldon noted that a fine educational program is still in place, thanks to the

efforts of staff and administration.

RESIDENT PAT Bell noted that the parents all want the best for their children, they don't want teacher cuts and they don't want program cuts. "The question is, do you want to pay for it (all)," she asked the audience.

Another parent advised that if the board was going to attempt to pass a

tax-rate increase, it should directly answer the questions the parents have been asking. For instance, "exactly how much money would this district save if all sports and extracurriculars were cut?" she asked.

She also suggested the board note specifically where the money from an additional millage will go.

## Art competition opens at OCC

Area artists are invited to participate in Oakland Community College's Second Annual Helen L. DeRoy Purchase Prize Art Competition.

This competition has been made possible as a result of a donation made in 1931 by the DeRoy Testamentary Foundation.

Since an additional sum has been added to supplement the original donation, the college will award two \$500 purchase prizes instead of one. In addition, there will be three honorable mentions.

The winning entries will be selected by a jury of area experts and later identified with a small plaque denoting them as a part of the permanent Helen DeRoy collection.

Artists are asked to submit their entries prior to November 4. Paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture and ceramics are acceptable. An entry form available from the Art Department at the Orchard Ridge Campus, must accompany each piece.

Entries will be on exhibit from November 9 through December 14 in the Orchard Ridge Theatre Art Gallery.

Helen L. DeRoy, born in 1882, devoted herself to philanthropy primarily in the Detroit area from the mid 1910's to the time of her death in 1977. She founded the Helen L. DeRoy Foundation in 1946.

Major gifts in the Southeastern Michigan area include the Helen L. DeRoy Auditorium and the Helen L. DeRoy Residence Hall at Wayne State University, the Helen L. DeRoy Sanctuary in Temple Beth El, and the Helen L. DeRoy Fellowship program — a \$100,000 endowment fund established at the University of Michigan Law School.

For more information about the competition call the Orchard Ridge Music and Fine Arts Department at 471-7775.

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