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Parents miffed at early recess for pupils

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Maybe they should have checked out Tally Hall.

That was the wry suggestion put forth by an observer at last Tuesday's Farmington Board of Education meeting during which an angry group of parents blasted a superintendent's decision to close an elementary school at noon and send home the students —

without notifying all the parents.

The observer, of course, was being facetious in suggesting that the mothers who couldn't be contacted at home might be found in the popular north Farmington eating place.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS did say, however, that they found it impossible to reach all the parents of the children at Wood Creek Elementary back on Sept.

21, a Friday, when electrical problems prompted Assistant Superintendent Lawrence Freedman to close the school early and bus the students home.

Freedman gave the following explanation at the Tuesday board meeting. A break in an underground electric cable serving the school, in the Wood Creek Hills subdivision west of Middlebelt Road between 12 and 13 Mile roads, resulted in the school operating

first on half power and then on no power at all.

Detroit Edison personnel said that repairs would take most of the day and that power would have to be turned off while the work was in progress.

"We felt we could operate on half power," Freedman said, "but not in a total blackout."

FREEDMAN EXPLAINED that the

12-year-old Wood Creek, Farmington's newest elementary, is a windowless building.

"It was pitch black in there," he said. "You couldn't even see to get to the bathroom."

So, at about 11:45 a.m., Freedman decided to close the school and send the students home — some apparently returning to locked, empty houses — while the Wood Creek staff started the

massive task of phoning the parents.

A "fan out" system was used where about a third of the parents were called and asked to notify other parents, said Freedman, who added that the task became more difficult when the school's telephone became unable to receive incoming calls.

BUT THE Wood Creek parents at

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Citizen group forms to boost Hills' mills

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

"Say Yes to Farmington Hills."

That's the borrowed name of a new citizens committee formed last week to actively promote passage of a charter amendment proposal on the Nov. 6 election ballot.

The proposal will ask Farmington Hills voters to give the city authority to levy up to an additional 1.5 mills for 20 years for capital improvements.

"We don't claim to be very creative or take credit for it," said Harold Larson, committee chairman, about the group's borrowed name.

BUT LARSON and the "35 plus" residents who attended an Oct. 1 meeting to discuss formation of a committee

hoping the borrowed name will bring the same type of positive results the state's "Say Yes" slogan has brought Michigan.

"As you know, the city as a governmental entity cannot promote a yes

vote on an issue," said Aldo Vagnozzi, committee vice chairman, about the need for the committee.

Committee members, Larson said, have some "very serious plans" for promoting the proposed charter amendment through "a successful, short and quick campaign."

LARSON SAID committee members will be making presentations to senior citizens, businesses and corporations, church and civic organizations, as well as Neighborhood Watch programs.

"We feel we have a great idea that you the council has spearheaded," Larson told council members.

Committee members also plan to distribute brochures and pamphlets urging passage of the proposed amendment, Vagnozzi said.

"We are raising our own money,"

Vagnozzi said about paying for pamphlets and brochures. "It's going to be entirely separate from the city."

BUT VAGNOZZI said he was unsure

of what a steering committee had planned for raising money for the pro-mill campaign.

The committee has 26 days until the election to convince voters of the need for the city's six-year capital improvements program and its accompanying financing plan.

The heart of the financing plan is the proposed charter amendment.

If approved, the city's total taxing authority would be increased from the current 10-mill charter limit to 11.5.

ORIGINALLY PROPOSED by Mayor or Charles Williams, the proposed charter amendment would separate operating millage from capital improvements millage.

The city charter's 10-mill limit provision would remain intact while a new section would be added to the charter pertaining to the additional 1.5 mills for capital improvements.

The proposal would protect the city's 10 mills for operating purposes while still having the additional 1.5 mills for necessary improvements.

While debating the issue this summer, some council members expressed concern that without a charter amendment future councils would be left with only one-half mill for operating purposes.

THE CITY'S capital improvements plan includes:

- Major road improvements.
- Storm drainage improvements.
- Sanitary sewer relief and water-main facilities.
- Construction of a new police building.
- An E-911 emergency phone dialing system.
- Sidewalk construction.
- Improvements to the city's parks and recreation facilities, including work on the Spicer property.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Thinking smart

Beating the high cost of groceries was their challenge and a food co-op was their answer. These women and many others like them have learned that a little hard work pays off. Now en-

tering its sixth year of operation, the Nature's Kitchen Co-op is going strong. To read more about this group, turn to the Suburban Life Section.

'Choice' gets gong from school board

Vote down Voter's Choice — that's the feeling of the Farmington Board of Education. And, as of last Tuesday, it has a resolution to prove it.

Meeting in regular session, Farmington's Board voted, 6-0, to approve a resolution opposing the so-called Voter's Choice Amendment (Proposal C) on the Nov. 6 ballot, which would force governmental units — including school districts — to exist at December 1981

budget levels unless residents voted to pay higher taxes.

"WE ARE concerned, as are many professionals in this state, that Proposal C will be extremely damaging to school districts," said Farmington Superintendent Lew Schulman, speaking in support of the anti-Voter's Choice resolution.

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How Latchkey program helps after-school kids

By K. Joyce O'Brien
special writer

Sue Brooks grew up an only child of working parents. She was known as a Latchkey Kid. The term refers to house keys and children like her were fastened to their clothing. She used the key to open the door to an empty house and lonely hours each day after school.

Today Sue supervises a Latchkey program. She is pleased that the children involved never have to carry keys. Prime Time is one of the programs ad-

ministered by Sue Brooks, Community Program Director of the Farmington Branch of the YMCA.

Seventy elementary school children look forward to the before and after school hours. Supervised games and crafts, as well as free time for homework, are provided at five Farmington public schools. Parents express delight to have this convenient licensed child care available.

GROWING NUMBERS of working mothers and single parents have raised

the need for supervised care during the hours when baby-sitters are least available. Approximately two million children under the age of 13 are routinely without supervision for some part of the day, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"Half of Oakland County now have Latchkey programs and the other half are studying the idea," said Sue Brooks. "We realized it was needed and it was time."

The Farmington Branch of the YMCA initiated programs in Longacre

and Wooddale Schools two years ago, leasing unused rooms. Flanders School was added last year. The program began at William Grace and Gill schools this current year. In rooms that are used only during the school hours.

MOST NEIGHBORING school districts providing a Latchkey program are administered by the school system, most often Community Education.

Brooks feels Prime Time's link with the Y has many advantages, even though the school programs work well

in other districts.

"The uniqueness of our program is that there is interplay between the sites and the YMCA. On days when school has half days and vacations, the children can come to the Y because we have alternate programs available," said Brooks.

Many children come to the program after going to Scout meetings and sport activities. They are able to be involved with outside activities, even though their parents are at work.

CHILDREN seem to realize there is a difference between this program and school time.

"For the children, the drawback of having it in the school and run by the school, is that it is still school to them," said Brooks. "The schools are happy because it is providing a service without cost or energy expended by them."

Because of the licensing by the Department of Social Services, the requirement for the child care worker is

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oral quarrel

What about policy on school closings?

On Sept. 21, electrical problems led a superintendent to order the early closing of Farmington Hills' Wood Creek Elementary School. More than 400 youngsters were bused home — many to locked houses where no one was home.

Tuesday a group of angry parents of Wood Creek students showed up at a school board meeting to criticize the decision to close the school and to demand a review of the district's policies on shutting down schools in an

emergency.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

How should the Farmington school district handle the unexpected closing of a school? What could have been done differently in the Wood Creek closing?

To answer this question, call 477-5450 anytime before 1 p.m. Friday. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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NEWSLINE 477-5450
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591-0900

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Halls are emptier than ever before

By Tom Baer
staff writer

The student population of the Farmington Public Schools is down slightly compared to last year's census, according to the district's "fourth Friday" head count.

The survey showed that 10,275 students — 252 fewer than at the start of the 1983-84 school year — are enrolled in the Farmington District's three high, four middle, 10 elementary schools and special education programs.

"We didn't lose as many as we thought," said Farmington Administra-

tive Assistant R. Scott Bacon, who's compiling the figures, "and that's a good sign."

"Our elementary schools continue to maintain their enrollment and, in fact, may even go up a little."

ENROLLMENT IN secondary (grades six through 12) schools was expected to be 5,806, Bacon said. Enrollment turned out to be 5,995. "Elementary is pretty much as we anticipated. It's 3,560."

Because of the post-war baby boom

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