

1990 target date for new school

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

Farmington Public Schools administrators and trustees are in a race against time to be ready for use by September 1990 the first new school in the district in 20 years.

The arduous process was launched Tuesday when deputy superintendent Michael Flanagan outlined for board members a timetable that he said must be carefully adhered to if the new elementary school is to be ready for students by school year 1990.

"It's an extremely tight time line. If anything in the process falls down, we'll miss the target date. But I feel pretty confident we can have a new building on the west side by 1990," Flanagan said.

Plans include both construction of a new elementary school to ease projected crowding and expansion of the Farmington High School media center. Combined costs of both proj-

ects is estimated at \$6 million.

Under Flanagan's timetable, an architect must be selected and tentative designs for the elementary school completed in time for review by school board members at their regular meeting in May.

Flanagan must also complete by that date a comprehensive state application identifying construction specifics and exact costs of the project. Once the district board approves the application, approval must be obtained from the state board of education in enough time to place the issue before voters.

If ALL goes according to plan, voters will be asked in a special election Wednesday, Sept. 14, to approve a bond for financing the elementary school. Flanagan said the exact amount of the bond request has not yet been ascertained, but a final figure will be ready by May. The total request will likely include costs for major renovations on existing buildings in the district.

The one question mark in this process is whether or not we will get approval from the state in time. The entire process sounds easy, but the bottom line is, we'll

have to work our tails off to get the question on the ballot by September," Flanagan said.

If financing is approved by voters, Flanagan expects construction on the new elementary school, near 11 Mile and Halsted, to begin by spring or summer 1989, allowing time enough for both construction and furnishing of the new school. Flanagan estimates it will take two months to equip and furnish the school.

The district already has money for expansion of the media center from the sale of school property to Little Caesar Enterprises at 12 Mile and Drake earlier this decade.

The district is now advertising in area newspapers and professional journals for interested architects who will be asked to complete comprehensive applications for review by the district's Buildings and Sites Committee, which includes three board members, superintendent Graham Lewis, Flanagan and other resource people.

THE FINALIST will be selected on the basis of references, a personal interview and inspections of completed projects by the architect. Flanagan intends to include educa-

tors and custodians in the on-site inspection process.

"We'll go right to the users of the building and ask them questions. We'll inspect things like the heating and ventilation systems, roofs and other things that tend to be major problems in schools. This will tell us a lot more than a sales pitch," he said.

During Tuesday's meeting, board members repeatedly emphasized the project "be done right and the proper amount of time be taken to do it right," Flanagan said.

The exact size of the new elementary school will be determined by projected enrollment increases over the next five years. Flanagan expects the figures to justify a 24-classroom school.

When completed, the school will be the first to be built in the district since construction of Woodcreek Elementary School nearly 20 years ago. The district currently has 23 buildings.

Renovations on existing buildings will include "face-lifting things," according to Flanagan. He said buildings 20 years old and older often need renovation on floors, lighting systems and roofs.

Her goal: decent standard for all

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"In Farmington and Farmington Hills, we have plenty of subsidized housing for seniors. We have none for low-income families — young people with children. I guess what that means here is that it is OK to be old and poor, but we don't want you here if you are young and poor."

She thinks it's healthier for the nation, healthier for the community, healthier for everybody to have a mix.

"When the money is given to middle or high income people," she said, "we call it mortgage interest deductions. When the money is given to the poor, we call it handouts."

KOWALESKI BELIEVES the combination of high rent and lack of low-cost housing is probably the biggest reason many get locked into the "vicious cycle of the welfare system, and can never work their way out."

"Well, that and some of the crazy rules, like you cannot get assistance if you have a car that's worth more than \$1,500. So a man is expected to sell a decent car and get back and forth to work in a junker," she said.

But housing is still the big problem. "Working for minimum wage might mean you have the \$350 to pay the rent that month, but you have nothing left to pay the food and utility bills. When he gets too

far behind to ever catch up, he can be beaten down to giving up and going on welfare," Kowaleski said.

When asked about a typical welfare system "Catch 22," Kowaleski told the story of a woman with three children she met recently.

The woman's husband had begun serving in the U.S. Army three months ago and had never received an allotment check. She had no food in the house and was three months behind in the rent.

"Appeals for assistance were denied before she could show a marriage certificate, birth certificates, and proof of her husband's whereabouts written by his immediate superior in the Army. She's going into court for eviction," Kowaleski said.

THE LEAGUE of Women Voters "wants our report read by the residents so they will understand what is going on in our own backyards," Kowaleski said.

"We have a median income of about \$40,000 here, yet more than 17 percent are living on less than \$10,000 a year."

Kowaleski is a graduate of Ross College in Forest Park, Ill. She's a member of Kappa Gamma Pi, an honor society for graduates of Catholic colleges.

She lobbies for and negotiates with state legislators over welfare proposals as a representative of League of Women Voters.

She and husband Ed have nine children, ages 19-35.

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police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

- **THEFTS REPORTED**
A cellular telephone valued at \$1,100 was reported stolen from a car parked at Farmington Tennis Club, 27777 Farmington, March 28.
A 1986 Pontiac valued at \$17,000 was reported stolen from Greenhill Apartments March 28-29.
Construction materials valued at \$1,500 were reported stolen from River Pine Condos March 28-29.
A color TV and a radar detector valued at \$900 were reported stolen from a house on Spring Lane March 28-29.

A color TV and money valued at \$1,100 were reported stolen from a house on the 21000 block of Middlebelt March 30.

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