

# Employees, without contract, face school board

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Members of the union representing Farmington support employees crowded the school board meeting room Tuesday, in a show of unity over a contract impasse.

"We've been working all year without a contract," said one member of the Educational Support Personnel, who sported the same "unity" button and blue ribbon worn by the mostly female membership.

"They just don't care."

The ESP represents secretaries and paraprofessionals in the district, who have worked without a contract since July 1.

Also present Tuesday were union leaders, including Zan Alley, chief negotiator for the nearly 300-member union, who spoke on behalf of her membership.

"Many . . . are here for one particular purpose, and that is really to sit and say 'look at us.' We feel that we've been rather invisible for a lot

of months," said Alley. "They have been very patient. Nine and a half months is long enough."

THE ISSUE of pay equity, which the union raised recently by surveying its membership, was also mentioned by Alley, Tuesday. "We want you to understand very clearly, pay equity is not a goal, it is a necessity."

Trustees were generally quiet, with the exception of Janice Rolnick and James Abernethy, who each

commented on the contract situation. Rolnick said the board negotiating team had offered pay increases of 5-20 percent, which she said were adequate.

"We certainly . . . do not feel you are an invisible group," she said. "We are very dependent on you and your skills. We really do feel we have been working on this. We feel a fair and equitable contract has been offered."

Abernethy reassured the group that the board is concerned and wants a settlement. "We care a great deal about the group of people out there," he said. "We have authorized what, in our estimation, is a very fair and very creative settlement."

"I can't say much more than that," Alley made a final comment, in an effort to move negotiations forward. "We did not come here to bargain in public," she said. "All we're asking is

that the process go forward."

UNION MEMBERS have said if their contract is not settled soon, other action might be taken, although they did not offer details. This is the first time the group has gathered before the board relating to the contract.

Also undecided as the end of the school year approaches is a contract for the Farmington school administrator's union.

## State committee reviews anti-smoking bills

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FARMINGTON HILLS resident Barbara Temporelli, her brother, Don Christy of Novi, and Temporelli's children, Carolyn, 11, and Chris, 13, all spoke before the standing Senate committee last week to declare their support of the six-bill package. They are members of People Against Tobacco Smoke, a group instrumental in fighting for recent anti-smoking legislation.

Chris, a student at Southfield Christian School and an asthmatic, spoke specifically about smoking in schools by reading a poem to senators. "Our principal feels it's (cigarettes) a gateway drug," he explained. "If they stop it, there won't

be problems with marijuana or crack (cocaine)."

His sister, Carolyn, a student at Longacre Elementary in Farmington, added, "I don't like to be around smoke at school." When there was smoking in her house, "I used to go up to my room and try and escape the smoke," she added.

"Tobacco is unique in that even when it is used as intended, it is inherently unsafe," said Raf Wiener, acting state public health director, during last week's hearings. She said Michigan sees more than 11,000 preventable deaths a year due to tobacco.

Barbara Temporelli addressed the general issue of smoking. "It's not the issue of taking rights away from

anyone," she said. "It's returning the rights to us. What we have to do is limit the (smoking) area."

"People are speaking up — they do have an opinion."

CHRISTY, A pilot, compared death by smoking to the crash of Northwest Flight 255, in which 157 people were killed last August.

"I live with it every day," he said. "But 1,000 people a day die from cigarettes in this country. That's equivalent to two jumbo jets colliding every day."

Yet, others spoke out against the six-bill package. One Michigan state Chamber of Commerce representative criticized all the bills as "seriously flawed."

"Certainly you have more worthwhile and productive legislation to pursue," said Richard Studley, chamber vice president for government relations.

Mona Young of the Michigan Education Association said her union was opposed to the bill affecting schools. She said the issue should be decided locally.

And David Remes of the Tobacco Institute objected to the bill banning free distribution of cigarettes, saying that's "an important form of promotion."

Vikas Kapil of the American Lung Association of Michigan endorsed all six bills last week, calling them "a major step toward reducing teen tobacco use and protecting children and adults alike from the deadly effects of tobacco addiction."



RANDY GORST/Staff photographer

Barbara Temporelli and children Carolyn, 11, and Christopher, 13, all People Against Tobacco Smoke members.

## School trustees OK some open enrollment

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open enrollment status to maintain his school's enrollment level. Concerns were raised this year over the possible loss of academic opportunities if the enrollment gets much lower.

"During recent boundary studies, affording a more-flexible approach to areas of attendance has been a topic of discussion," said superintendent Graham Lewis, in recommending the change Tuesday.

STUDENTS OPTING for a school outside of their normal attendance area would have to provide their own transportation, Lewis added.

Graham said he didn't think open enrollment at his school would be an excessive draw. "I think most kids want to go to school in their own neighborhood," he said.

At Round Table president and Farmington High School senior Drew McDougall agreed, adding, "I would not switch, even if I had the possibility."

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