

# 2 hopefuls present school race platforms

Name: Helen Prutow.  
Address: 13 Mile, Farmington Hills.  
Age: 47.  
Length of residence in district: 17 years.  
Family: husband, William; sons, Kenneth, 25 and Jerry, 21.  
Education: Detroit Cooley High School; Virginia Farrell School of Cosmetology; Oakland Community College, 14 credits.  
Government involvement: Farmington Board of Education trustee for 12 years. First elected in 1976, re-elected in 1980 and 1984. Has served as secretary, vice president and president. Appointed Oakland Intermediate School District in 1985, and elected to the post in 1988. Chairwoman of the Michigan Association of School Boards Legal Trust Fund, to which she was appointed in February 1985.  
Community involvement: Board representative to Farmington Youth Assistance 1985-86.



Helen Prutow  
Farmington Hills

## Abernethy, Prutow challenge incumbent

Three Farmington-area residents will vie for two four-year terms on the school board in Farmington Public Schools' annual election Monday, June 13.  
Newcomer Bruce Jacob will challenge incumbents James Abernethy and Helen Prutow.  
The Observer asked the candidates 14 questions about education issues in general and Farmington schools in particular. The first seven answers from Abernethy and Prutow appear in this edition; the other half will appear next week.  
Jacob did not return his questionnaire, so is not included. He is a podiatrist who lives on Branchester in Farmington Hills and is married with two children.  
COVERAGE is also planned for two candidate nights, one held last

night and another slated for next Wednesday. The American Association of University Women will host the June 1 forum at 7:30 p.m. at O. E. Dunkel Middle School, 12 Mile near Farmington Road.  
For those interested in absentee voting, ballots will be available at the Lewis Schulman Administration Center, 32500 Shawwassee, until Saturday, June 11. Special hours that day will be 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
The seven-member, non-partisan school board considers recommendations from the salaried administration and sets all district policies. Trustees are paid \$30 per meeting attended.  
Farmington Public Schools include all of Farmington, most of Farmington Hills and a portion of West Bloomfield Township.



James Abernethy  
Farmington

the upgrading of our elementary learning experiences in music, art, science and creative writing.  
In order for this to become a reality, the following events must occur:

- a speedy construction of a sizeable new elementary school.
- dissemination of positive curriculum and staffing experiences from the Highmeadow Common Cause.
- hiring of elementary staff with strengths in these important areas when vacancies or new positions occur.
- gaining of community support to make a systemswide commitment a reality.

This district should rid itself of "art in a cart" and "science on a sled" wherever it exists. We should make a real commitment to early experiences in creativity and problem solving for all children in environments that truly enhance the learning experience.

3. What is your philosophy on the relationships between a school board and the district administration?  
As a board, we should ensure that only the best available personnel are hired for administrative positions.

Assuming that happens, we should foster an environment that encourages them to be creative, positive and flexible in their role. The board should expect the administrative staff to function as a team, supporting each other.  
However, the board should carefully review all proposals. It should not provide a routine "rubber stamp." We should expect a careful, thought-out presentation on all proposals, highlighting the weaknesses as well as the benefits of the recommendation. Tough, but relevant questions need to be asked, hopefully, in advance of meetings, to allow considered responses.

The board should expect each administrator to honestly and thoroughly evaluate their staff. This can probably only be done by "MBWA" (Management By Walking Around).

4. How will you best represent parents in this community if you are elected? How will you best represent taxpayers without children in the district?

My children have recently graduated from the Farmington Public Schools. Therefore, it is possible for me to feel a personal closeness to current happenings without any potential conflict of interest.

I will commit myself to continue to fairly and critically evaluate all proposals and issues that come before your board of education. My commitment to equality of educa-

tional opportunities for students of all ability levels in each building in our district will continue.  
Parents must feel comfortable in approaching teachers and building administrators with questions or concerns.  
The entire population should be able to use more of the district's resources. For example, the expanded Farmington High School media center should be available after school for all residents.

5. Explain your philosophy on school district budget surpluses.

I agree with our district's independent auditors (Plante and Moran) when they point out that a fund equity (surplus) is a very necessary "safety net." We have followed their recommendations to maintain a 10 percent fund equity to be available for any number of local, state (for example, new school reform legislation) or national (for example, asbestos removal) contingencies. That equity will allow us to cover the costs of the Farmington Public Schools for about 20 days.

Maintaining this fund equity is important in that it will hopefully allow us to continue to use our time planning and running a good school system rather than spending precious time trying to cut or eliminate programs.

However, we have an obligation to the taxpayers to ensure that this fund equity is invested carefully to safely maximize the potential "income" from this source of funds. We cannot ever treat fund equity as a "money tree." It must remain a safety net.

6. How can the school board be more effective?

We must insist upon a greater measure of quality long-range planning in the recommendations that are brought before us. We should devote a minimum of at least one entire board meeting to long-range planning. One may not be enough with the range of topics in front of us in the near future. I support a continuation of the current monthly study sessions.

We should insist upon a thorough presentation of the positive and negative sides to every recommendation. Adequate time to make decisions must be provided. We should resist attempts to quickly force decisions regardless of the source of pressure.

Newly initiated pilot programs must be carefully and honestly reviewed before the board approves a "permanent" status. Occasionally, this monitoring should be provided by objective third parties whose findings should not be biased by close program contact.

7. What is the role of public education?

For most people, it is the place where we trust our most precious possessions, our children, to see their potential realized. In 13 years, the public educational system is expected to not only teach the basics well but to allow a child to explore the practical and performing arts, explore other cultures and languages and to prepare for a meaningful life.

To do that, public education must develop skills, encourage the refinement of talents, allow the opportunity to confront disappointments and to develop a thoroughly civilized way to resolve problems.

We must give our children an opportunity to appreciate the heritage of this country, its laws, values, and our governmental system.

1. Why are you running for the school board?

I am an experienced member of the Farmington Board of Education. The board will be dealing with many important issues during the next four years. I believe that my knowledge and experience will be useful and that I can continue to make a contribution to improving the Farmington school system.

2. What is your pet project or goal for Farmington Public Schools?

I always have been involved in assuring that special education programs meet the need of our students, and I believe that much progress has been made during the years that I have served on the board. My goal now is to help ensure that Farmington schools continue to progress in all areas so that our students are prepared for life in the next century.

3. What is your philosophy on the relationship between a school board and the district administration?  
The spirit of cooperation that

presently exists between the board and the administration is very important. The administration must be responsible for running the system, and the board has to give the administrators the latitude to do that. The board's role is to provide policy direction, and to make sure that the administration is moving in the direction that the community wants and to speak up when it appears administrators may be considering actions that may not be consistent with the board's views.

4. How will you best represent parents in this community if you are elected? How will you best represent taxpayers without children in the district?

I always have made it a practice to listen to parents and the community at large, to respond to their concerns, to get answers to their questions and to make sure that the administration is sensitive to the issues that are raised. I continue to be close to many parents with children in the schools.

5. Explain your philosophy on school district budget surpluses.  
We must maintain a sufficient

fund equity to be able to deal with uncertainties of changes in state and federal programs and funding so that we do not suddenly find ourselves in a deficit position.

6. How can the school board be more effective?

Through workshops and programs offered by various associations, the board members can keep up-to-date with emerging issues and opportunities.

7. What is the role of public education?

To educate all of the children who come to the schools, regardless of their abilities or handicaps, and to make sure that each child reaches his or her full potential. That includes the gifted student, the average child and those with special problems.

Name: James J. Abernethy.  
Address: Birchwood, Farmington.

Age: 47.  
Education: bachelors degree in architecture from University of Detroit; masters degree in urban planning from Wayne State University.  
Occupational: professor of architecture, Lawrence Institute of Technology, Southfield.

Government involvement: Farmington Public Schools trustee, 1984 to present. City of Farmington Planning Commission, 1979 to 1987. City of Farmington Zoning Board of Appeals, 1977-79. Farmington Meadows Homeowners Association board, 1987 to present.

Community involvement: Ward Presbyterian Church, elder, deacon, site development administrator, 1985 to present. Farmington Rotary Club member, 1978 to 1981.

Length of residence in district: 21 years.

Family: wife, Jo Anne; sons, Bruce, 19, sophomore at Calvin College, and Craig, 17, Farmington High School senior who will attend the University of Michigan School of Engineering in fall.

1. Why are you running for the school board?

Many important challenges, opportunities and issues lie ahead of the Farmington Public Schools in the next few years. We are a fortunate district with a rich tradition. Our fine system has the opportunity to become truly outstanding. The events of the next few years will make a difference as we attempt to blend a new administration with mature teaching and support staffs.

The quality of long-range planning that is under way in the areas of curriculum and staff development needs to be extended into more comprehensive studies of facility placement and utilization. We must gain community support for a desperately needed new elementary school. We cannot assume that taxpayers will be willing to increase millage for a school that might be a long distance from their home.

2. What is your pet project or goal for Farmington Public Schools?

I would commit myself to the realization of dedicated learning centers for the entire student body in each elementary school. Such centers would be extremely helpful in



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Stephen Bromberg, the attorney representing Southfield Schools and Occidental Development, points to a map of the 11 Mile-Inkster Road area, the proposed 50-acre site of a disputed apartment complex. Bromberg failed to convince members of the Southfield Planning Commission that the property can't be developed with single-family homes.

## City, schools, developer move backwards in land sale debate

A heated land-use dispute between Southfield schools, a developer and the city is likely to boil over into a lawsuit.

The district taking the city to court would be "biting the hand that feeds them at taxpayers' expense," according to officials and area homeowners.

"We pay taxes for schools," said Herman Kaufman, an area resident. "The school district hired an attorney and pays him out of our money to help get something we're fighting against."

At issue is a 50-acre tract of land owned by the district on the east side of Inkster Road south of 11 Mile. The Southfield School District and Occidental Development Wednesday night lost round three of the battle to rezone the parcel.

To the relief of a standing-room-only crowd of dissenting residents, the Southfield Planning Commission turned preliminary thumbs down to rezoning the single-family property for two-story buildings that would provide a total of 557 apartments.

If the city council also rejects the proposed land-use switch, the school board has agreed to contribute up to \$50,000 in attorney fees in a joint lawsuit with Occidental against the city.

THE DEVELOPER offered the schools \$2.5 million for the school land contingent on rezoning for an apartment complex. The latest rezoning attempt, a scaled-down version of the first, follows the city council's denial last April of a proposed three-story, 672-unit apartment project.

Stephen Bromberg, special counsel for the school board and general counsel for Occidental, argues that the land can't be developed for single-family homes at a profit. He termed denial of the rezoning "unconstitutional and confiscatory."

According to planners, however, apartments on the site would have a probable negative effect on single-family homes in the area.

Harold Bussey, school board trustee, said there were no surprises at Wednesday's public hearing, and schools

are committed to go to court if necessary.

"The schools won't subsidize single-family development with school money," said John Carlson, attorney for the Southfield Board of Education. "The school district has a business to run just as does a private developer and (it) stands to get \$350,000 a year in property taxes from the proposed apartment complex."

Phil McKenna, whose firm is updating Southfield's 1968 future land use plan, said the city's pattern is to protect single-family residential areas from encroachment by other uses.

"THE REQUESTED rezoning is a potential threat and not in keeping with the concepts built into the proposed master plan," he said. "The plan calls for single-family homes on undeveloped land to accommodate future housing needs."

According to real estate brokers, home values in the area have increased 13 percent, McKenna said. There is no need for more apartments, he said.

Bromberg said the 1968 land-use plan identifies the 50 acres as "school board property."  
Southfield school enrollment has dropped each year since 1971, he said. The Inkster Road property was acquired for a high school, but the two high schools in the city are underpopulated, he said. Therefore, the Inkster site is for sale as surplus land.

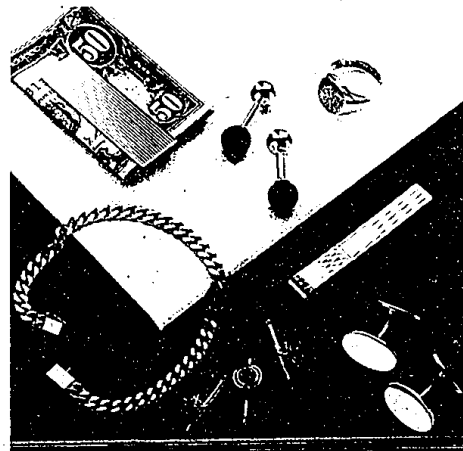
The property has been on the market since 1980, Bromberg said, and there have been no offers, or even inquiries, for single-family development, he said.

"The schools have a duty to maximize the benefit for the district and taxpayers," he said. "This property has been on the market for years."

THE CLOSEST sanitary sewer is on the north side of 11 Mile, 2,000 feet north of the property, Bromberg said. It would be necessary to pump into the system and maintain storage areas on the site to take care of effluent in peak hours, he said.

The cost of operating and maintaining such a system would be \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year, too high to make single-family units feasible, Bromberg said.

Accent on sophistication  
Greenstone's offers a fashionable array of men's accessories with the powerful appeal of sophistication. When you need a distinctive gift, Greenstone's has what you want. All items pictured are 14K gold, priced from \$125.



GREENSTONE'S  
CREATORS OF FINE JEWELRY

528 N. WOODWARD, BIRMINGHAM, MI 48011 4 BLOCKS NORTH OF MAPLE 313/642-2650  
MONDAY-SATURDAY 9:30 TO 5:30