

WL slates bond issue for immediate needs

By Carolyn DeMarco
Staff writer

Voters in the Walled Lake School District will be asked to vote on a \$47.8 million bond issue in a March 20 election.

The Walled Lake Board of Education Monday night accepted the recommendation of Superintendent James Geisler to go to the voters with a proposal to borrow less than

the previously estimated \$60-70 million needed to accommodate rapid growth and totally update the aging school system.

If approved, the 15-year \$47.8 million bond will allow the district to address the most urgent needs of the system over the next three years. It would cost owners of a \$150,000 market value home, about \$200 more annually than they are now paying.

The bond issue would:

- Build two new elementary schools.
- Build a new junior high.
- Build a bus garage/maintenance facility.
- Renovate existing schools to provide equity.
- Purchase a warehouse.
- Acquire any necessary land parcels to house the new facilities.

At least one, and probably both of those elementary schools are needed to house the burgeoning numbers of new residents in West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills.

ASKED IF the bond issue will pass in a community traditionally reluctant to OK money for schools, Geisler said, "In the six months I've been in the district I've met a great

many people who are concerned about the future of education in Walled Lake. We're offering a package that is understandable and defensible. It is hefty, but it is a realistic first step.

The timeline offered by Geisler showed land bought and one elementary school and the bus/maintenance facility started in June 1989. In June 1990 a new junior high school will begin construction and Central High School will be renovated. A second elementary school will be started in June 1991, a warehouse purchased or built and renovations started at Smart Junior High and Western High School.

In a breakdown of costs, Geisler said basic construction costs including design are estimated to be \$42.8 million. Additional costs factored in are inflation, \$2 million; land acquisition, \$1.5 million; and consultant fees and contingencies, \$3.6 million. The interest on money invested before it is used is expected to offset that \$50.3 million total by \$2.5 million.

Estimating the cost to taxpayers, Geisler said a conservative annual 8 percent rise in state equalized valuations is being calculated and bond rates ranging from 7 1/4 to 7 3/4 percent.

Over a 15-year period the amount levied to pay off the debt will go from a high of 2.97 mills in 1990 to a low of 1.16 mills in the year 2005. The increase will place Walled Lake eighth of 28 Oakland County school districts in the size of its debt levy.

Currently it is 27th.

IF APPROVED, owners of a \$50,000 home with a state equalized value of \$25,000 will see their school taxes rise \$65, from \$905 to \$970. School taxes for the owners of an \$80,000 home assessed at 50 percent will rise from \$1,447 to \$1,552, or \$105. A \$150,000 home will be assessed \$2,910, up from \$2,714.

Geisler said the state's current "circuit breaker" law will actually mean only half the increase will reach the taxpayers.

Several pressing needs of the district will be put off for several years and may require another bond issue at a later date.

"We want to be honest and up front about it," he said. Those needs include adding gyms separate from cafeterias in elementary schools, converting Walled Lake Junior High School to non-classroom use, future elementary schools if rapid growth continues and secondary needs as the current elementary students move up.

Board trustee Joel Silverblatt of West Bloomfield said, "The district has in excess of 35,000 registered voters. There are 8,500 students, allowing for single parents that means 12,000-13,000 voters, but we never see more than 3,000 voters out. We'd like support from the whole community but all it takes is parents. If we want the bond issue to pass it takes people to do it."

Short-term solutions to current overcrowding in the schools will be addressed in a January meeting.

Faxon asks ruling on travel grants

State Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, requested an Attorney General's opinion to determine if members of the state Board of Education, as well as staff members, guests and legislators, are allowed to use federal grant money to travel abroad.

Recent foreign travel expenses charged to federal funds have been

identified by the Senate Fiscal Agency as coming from funds designated for mathematics and science grants. These grants, totaling \$3.8 million, were approved by the state Board of Education in September to 30 Michigan colleges and universities.

However, members of the state Board of Education have used these

funds along with other grants to secure trips to various foreign countries for themselves, staff members and in-laws.

For example, a \$89,000 grant awarded to Lansing Community College was used to pay for a trip to develop a better understanding of Asian countries, culture and language.

"Although I understand that federal law does permit grant monies to be used for foreign language study, I question whether this trip bears much value toward that objective. This is why I asked the Attorney General to examine the actions of the state Board of Education and to rule on the appropriate use of the grants," said Faxon.

Hills man receives state service award

John Webber of Farmington Hills was awarded the Michigan Association of Counseling and Development's first Distinguished Service Award for his 25 years of contribution to the association.

Webber, director of counseling at Schoolcraft College, Livonia, has

been affiliated with MACD since its inception. MACD is a professional organization whose members represent the helping professions.

He was instrumental in forming the first state chapter and writing its charter in 1953. Webber served the

organization as its fourth president 1968-69, coordinated the state convention every fourth year since 1974, coordinated the American Association of Counseling and Development national convention in 1978, and served on many committees.

Webber and his counseling staff have offered Human Potential Seminars to thousands of people since the early 1970s. He was the state coordinator of Human Potential Seminars and founder of the Michigan Association for Specialists in Group Work, a division of MACD.

Bid opening date set for school media center

Bid opening dates have been set for the renovation and addition project for the Farmington High School media center.

Bids will be opened during a special Jan. 10 school board meeting, when concrete footings, masonry, elevator, concrete slabs, demolition, structural steel and some mechanical and electrical equipment are on the agenda. The board is expected to

award contracts at the Jan. 24 meeting.

More bids will be opened during a special Feb. 21 board meeting, when foundations, doors and windows, mechanical and electrical equipment, roofing, plumbing and site work are on the agenda. The board is expected to award contracts at the Feb. 28 meeting.

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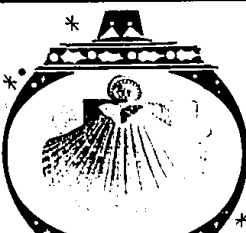

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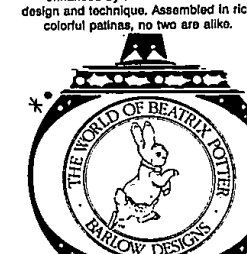
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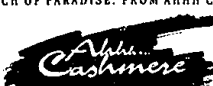
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