

C'ville hopefuls discuss district needs

Incumbent challenged by 1988 CHS graduate

By Kevin Brown
staff writer

The race for one contested seat on the Clarenceville Board of Education pits one-year incumbent Gary Gasser against Dale Weighill.

The candidates, who will vie for a two-year board term in the June 12 election, addressed issues in a recent interview with the Observer.

Another incumbent, board secretary Linda Aherny, is running uncontested for re-election to a four-year term on the board.

The district includes students from portions of Farmington Hills, Livonia and Redford Township.

GASSER, a 41-year-old General Motors Co. engineer with two children attending Clarenceville schools, stresses his community involvement.

Weighill, 18, a University of Michigan-Dearborn student who graduated from Clarenceville High last year, stresses a need for the board to be more receptive to the public, and for a progressive voice on the board.

In choosing a superintendent to replace Michael Shiber, the person "should be open, accessible to the people in the district, an educator, a person with the students' main interest in mind," Gasser said.

Weighill stressed looking for a

candidate "who can deal effectively with his fellow administrators, can work very closely with board members, and has to have good relations with the teaching staff. . . . Because they've had so many problems recently, and most importantly, a superintendent who cares about children and their education."

AS TO the state of the district financially and in its instructional program, the recent passage of a millage increase guarantees the district will be in good financial shape "for at least the next four or five years," Gasser said. Passing the millage allows the district to add full-time librarians, reduce class sizes, and offering programs that have not been offered," he said.

Weighill touts adding a required geography class either for the middle or high school. A survey he conducted of 48 Clarenceville High students showed 20 percent couldn't name the leader of the Soviet Union, 66 percent did not know which continent the Amazon River is on, and 83 percent did not know which country was led by Manuel Noriega.

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— Gary Gasser
incumbent



stress some geographic skills," he said.

ON THE issue of state education funding reform, discussed in the state Legislature in recent years, "I do believe education funding reform is needed as well as property tax reform," Gasser said.

He said that while the district will soon go out-of-formula, "based on the decisions that come down from Lansing a year from now or in the fall, we may very well be back in formula."

Going out-of-formula means Clarenceville will not receive state aid to boost per-pupil spending because the district is able to raise enough money through local taxes.

"I feel that we need school reform in Michigan, you can see that because Clarenceville had to raise its millage," Weighill said.

"It used to be where the state would provide 50 percent of the funds and the local community would provide 50 percent. But that's changed. . . . The Legislature should get its act together and address that issue seriously."

— Dale Weighill
challenger



"We get more feedback from the district that we like the idea of being a small community," Gasser said. "We get more one-on-one relationships between the board, the staff, the students, the parents, there's a lot of community involvement."

"And I think that's the type of system that the majority of the district would like to maintain."

ASKED HOW they will prepare for board meetings, "I've been telling the voters as I've been going door-to-door campaigning that it's my commitment to them, to be their representative," Weighill said.

"That's not to say I will go with the popular opinion every time. But the people out there have been telling me that they think the school board is somewhat removed from

the community . . . and that we do need some new ideas on the school board."

"So, I would go to the community to get some of their input, I would go to teachers, staff, to see what their views are on an issue. . . . I don't want to be a rubber stamp for anyone's ideas, the superintendent's or the teachers'."

"As a board member, we encourage input from the district, from the staff, or the students, what are things you need to have discussed before the board," Gasser said. "These topics are generally presented a week before in an update, so we have time to address the issues, to go out to the public or the teachers on a one-on-one basis."

"There's an awful lot of preparation for a board meeting," he said. The board goes a long way to respond to community needs, he said.

Westside fire station may become TV studio

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills' westside fire station on Research Drive might become a cable television studio.

"We don't have a contract signed or anything," City Manager William Costick said.

But negotiations continue with MetroVision of Oakland County to possibly refit the fire station for cable television studio use.

"It would supplement what we already have," MetroVision general manager Bob McCann said.

The cable company has offices and studios at 37633 Enterprise Court, off Halsted, north of Grand River.

City officials are planning to build a more central fire station to replace the station at 2401 Research Drive. State and federal agencies, along with the city's documented mid-census population growth would be used to help build the new station. A design for a central station has not yet been developed, Costick said.

ANY EFFORT to use the fire station as a television studio and possi-

bly offices for the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission would be a joint venture, McCann and Costick said.

Discussions about using the fire station for cable television began approximately 1½ years ago.

"There's a lot of space problems and operational problems with the studios," Costick said. "We discussed the idea of either expand or get new ones (facilities)."

McCann confirmed that business is booming both in subscriptions and the use of the studios for cable ac-

cess programs aired over Channel 12.

"It's fairly obvious there's been a great deal of growth," he said.

In the past five years, community access programming has grown substantially with the production of a total 2,178 locally produced shows, SWOCC executive director Lark Samouelian said.

The studios at the MetroVision offices on Enterprise Court are busy and do not easily accommodate au-

diences, which are becoming more popular with the cable access talk shows, Samouelian said.

The fire station bays, where fire equipment is stored, are ideal for transforming into studios, Costick said. Possible remodeling and equipment costs are being considered, he said.

AMONG THE items being negotiated with MetroVision are capital costs, maintenance costs, equipment and studio costs, Costick said.

When remodeling was begun on the Farmington City Hall last year, SWOCC offices were moved to the Mulwood Plaza shopping center, on the northwest corner of Drake and Grand River. SWOCC represents the cities of Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi, which have a 15-year franchise with MetroVision.

The cities are in the fifth year of the franchise with MetroVision, which has 26,000 subscribers, McCann said.

Clarenceville district will go out-of-formula

By Kevin Brown
staff writer

Clarenceville will become an out-of-formula school district — one that does not get state aid to boost spending per pupil — sooner than officials had expected.

The Clarenceville Board of Education has announced that, beginning with the 1989-90 school year, district officials expect to join just more than 7 percent of state districts that raise enough tax money per pupil to be deemed out-of-formula.

The announcement came in a recent letter from the board to its 60 adult education teachers. The district covers parts of Farmington Hills, Livonia and Redford Township.

Partly by transferring operation of its adult education program to another school district, and by gaining more tax money than expected on top of the recently approved millage increase, the district will spend more money per K-12 pupil — from \$3,700 last year to \$4,250 this year — and join the ranks of the state's out-of-formula districts.

School officials said possible program improvements, in addition to improvements already planned due to the voted millage increase, won't be determined until after contracts are settled.

IN A related issue, the Farmington Board of Education has not renewed its adult education consortium agreement with Clarenceville because of the district's new out-of-formula status. Instead, the Farmington district will enter into a consortium with Huron Valley Schools, an in-formula district, which will administer the program. Only through

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an in-formula district can state money for adult education be funneled.

In theory, a school district does not decide whether to be in-formula — getting state aid to insure a certain amount of spending per pupil — or out-of-formula.

A district's status is determined by how much tax money it raises through the factors of property valuations and the millage rate at which voters allow themselves to be taxed.

BUT BECAUSE the higher-than-projected state equalized value increase and the recently voted millage increase drew the district closer to that dividing line between in-formula and out-of-formula, officials realized they could cross that line by dropping adult education operations — which Clarenceville would lose \$100,000 on next year, said Ralph Skrocki, assistant superintendent for business.

That choice was made, he said, "based on our best judgment at this time. We are out-of-formula and will continue to be out-of-formula for the next several years," he said, based on projections that district property values will continue to rise at about

10 percent annually.

School officials are negotiating with three school districts. One will be selected to take over Clarenceville's adult education program.

OF TEACHERS now working in the program, "The only difference they should notice is their paychecks will have a different name at the top," Skrocki said.

Rose Govig, adult education manager, said the district's 645 adult education students "probably won't notice any change at all."

Outside school districts have in the past administered adult education operations in the district, Govig said. "We're just assuming it will be business as usual."

Like other out-of-formula districts, Clarenceville will continue to receive state "categorical" aid, provided by the state to districts to carry out state-mandated programs. These programs include special education, transportation and teacher training.

Skrocki said state categorical aid money paid by the state will decrease slightly, from \$210,000 to \$200,000, because the district is going out-of-formula.

Business women elect Zimmerman president

Farmington Hills resident Nancy Zimmerman was elected president of the Michigan Federation of Business and Professional Women at its state convention in Flint May 19-21.

Zimmerman, 32, a second vice president at Manufacturers National Bank of Detroit, is the youngest woman to be elected president of the Michigan Federation. She is a mem-

ber of its Canton Chapter.

The Michigan Federation of Business and Professional Women was formed in 1910 to promote the interests of women in business and the professions.

The National Federation of Business and Professional Women will hold its national convention in Detroit at Cobo Hall July 23-27.



Nancy Zimmerman

