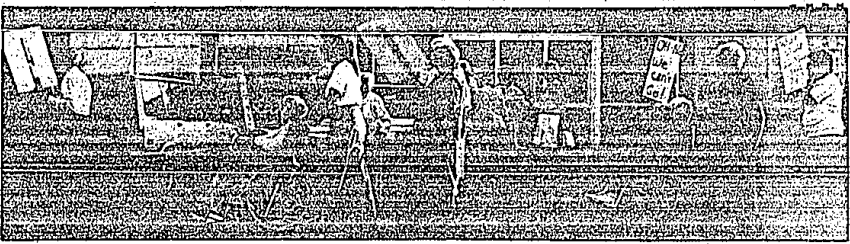




Pam O'Malley (left), school/community relations director, and school board members Janice Rolnick, Susan Rennels and Helen Prutow gather during a recess at the school board meeting Tuesday, before the high school completion program was discussed.



Acting superintendent Michael Flanagan (left) speaks with adult education teacher Joanne Allen after a recess had been called following public comments about the high school completion program.



Elderly residents picket the entrance to the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center before the start of the school board meeting Tuesday night.

photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

# More picketing Angry exchanges with seniors continue

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

Elderly residents Tuesday again picketed Farmington Public Schools' decision to move high school completion classes from senior citizen apartment complexes to a central site this fall.

They contend that taking the classes from their six independent living centers would prohibit them from participating because of physical handicaps and transportation problems.

The issue, brought up the two previous weeks, sparked an angry exchange Tuesday during public comment at the school board meeting.

Some senior citizens presented signed petitions; some held recall signs face down in their laps.

**THIRTEEN PEOPLE** spoke in support of reinstating on-site academic classes.

"We would like to have our classes back at any cost whatsoever," said Pay Nelson, a resident at Farmington Place Apartments.

"We refuse to go to any strange building at our age, on different buses, mixing in with the younger generation, picking up their coats, etc., etc.," said one resident.

Other senior citizens also spoke.

"You young people have seen us before," said Sylvia Cantor, a resident at American House Retirement Residence.

"Unfortunately, some of us are physically disabled, and that would make it next to impossible to go to another place. I don't know what else we can do."

"We have picketed, we have signed petitions, we have talked on television. We could get down on our hands and knees, but then how in the heck could we get up again?"

CAROL HAMILTON of American House Retirement Residence presented a petition with 53 signatures. "Our residents pay \$40,000-50,000 in taxes, so we feel our residents deserve these classes," said Hamilton, the activities director.

"I taught for many years. There are others beside myself who have degrees living there, and we are all so glad to learn. I know what education does for any age," said Marion Thompson, a former teacher who lives at Marion Oakland West.

"I believe I have a good cause," said Jeanne Allen, an adult education teacher since 1975. "They don't want enrichment classes, they want academic classes. Maybe just the word academic makes them feel better."

Allen said there has always been an open-door policy letting senior citizens with diplomas attend academic classes anyway. At one point, she burst in tears and accused the school board of "ripping a diploma out of somebody's hands."

"We are not ripping a diploma out of anybody's hands," Prutow shot back.

Prutow called Allen's request out of place but then polled the audience asking how many of them were high school graduates. "You're not eligible for these classes," said Prutow to the people who raised their hands.

THURSTEE JANICE Rolnick called Allen's statements "blatantly derogatory and defamatory."

An Aug. 22 letter addressed to Pam O'Malley, school/community relations director, from Ken Walsh, supervisor of adult basic and community education for the state Department of Education in Lansing, supported the Farmington Public Schools administration and board decision.

"There is particular concern about the quality of senior citizen high school completion program-

ing," Walsh said. "Often the major interest is not completing 'high school education' but rather pursuing personal activities and interests."

"BECAUSE OF this, the individual classes and locations may not be comparable to the regular program of the district as required by state school aid. Obviously, locations of classes is a decision of the local district, however state aid provisions must be met as well as other quality expectations."

"It is difficult to adjust programs. However, it appears the motive is proper, it has been well-thought-out and alternatives have been provided."

O'MALLEY ALSO announced plans for a senior coordinator to help establish a volunteer transportation network for senior citizens to attend the Farmington Community School on Shawwassee at Tuck, where the high school completion classes were moved.

Also on a trial basis for the 1990-91 school year, one enrichment class per term will be offered tuition free at each senior citizen residence in Farmington and Farmington Hills if requested. Additional weekly classes will be offered, as requested, for \$2 per student per eight-week session.

ALLEN WANTED board presi-

# Residents fight flood fixup assessments

By Noreen Flack  
staff writer

Some Farmington Hills residents oppose an administrative recommendation that they pay the city back for easing basement flooding.

They feel the city should tap the Sanitary Sewer Fund, which contains \$9 million for planned sanitary sewer system improvements, and "foot the bill" for the flood control program.

"As far as paying, I've paid for 13 years," said Diane Wernette, a Middlebelt resident. "I should not be responsible for this problem. I've lost thousands of dollars."

The Farmington Interceptor Basement Backup Program calls for qualified contractors to make improvements, including installation of a backflow preventer, at 20 houses prone to flooding. The cost: \$1,000 to \$2,500 per house.

Once the improvements are made, the Oakland County Department of Public Works would collect from each residence \$30 per quarter, through water and sewer billings, for 8-20 years, under the administrative recommendation.

The interceptor, which runs along Middlebelt, between Grand River and 14 Mile, overflows five times a year, which, in turn, floods basements for some houses at least once and often 2-3 times a year, the DPW reports.

The backflow preventer works like a valve to direct flow away from basement drains, toward the interceptor.

THE STATE has ordered the city to reduce sewage flows transported through the interceptor for treatment in Detroit.

The basement backup program will supplement interceptor corrections made within 2 1/2 years as part of the Evergreen/Farmington Pollution Control Facilities Plan.

The program will ease some but perhaps not all of the basement flooding caused by interceptor overflow in major storms, said Thomas Blaseil, Farmington Hills public service director.

Interceptor overflow and sewer pipe backup results from water infiltration through leaks in the system and stormwater inflow through house downspouts and footing drains. The problem is compounded by upstream communities discharging into the interceptor.



Thomas Blaseil  
public service director

Residents in the Lincolnshire, Kimberley and Woodcreek Farms area seem to experience the most flooding, Blaseil said.

"The city should bail us out of this," said Karen Harper, who experienced flood damage three weeks after she moved to a house on Middlebelt in May. "This house is unsellable."

CITY OFFICIALS were concerned that pipes connected to the interceptor might not handle the pressure of flow pushed back by the backflow preventers. The connecting pipes will be examined, but no problems

**'As far as paying, I've paid for 13 years. I should not be responsible for this problem. I've lost thousands of dollars.'**

— Diane Wernette  
Middlebelt resident

are expected, Blaseil said. Homeowners are responsible for maintaining the device, including replacement of the seal cap and unclogging drains.

When voting on the payback, the city council deadlocked 3-3 because Aldo Vagnozzi was absent. That left funding undecided. It will be decided on Aug. 28, when all seven members are expected to attend the council meeting.

Councilman Paul Sowerby argued that flooding is an "act of God" and the payback is a fair way to address the sewage problem.

"We cannot spend city funds for private residences," he said. "We don't have the finances to pay for everyone."

Paying for flood damage would be an "open door and encourage all types of claims," such as paying for car damage if a motorist hits a pothole, Sowerby said.

Councilman Ben Marks said solving the flooding crisis is the city's responsibility. "This is a condition we inherited," he said. "When these homes were built, engineers did not take into consideration future growth."

COUNCILMAN PHILIP Arnold said residents should have bought backflow preventers after experiencing damage in the past.

Some residents said they have suffered flood damage for the past 15 years. If the city pays for the devices, residents who bought them previously will have to be reimbursed, Arnold said.

"It is like the Third World when you have leeches in your house and three feet of water in the basement," said Ann O'Sullivan, who lives on Middlebelt. "That's (the payback) not gonna cut the mustard."

City staff will inspect houses to determine necessary improvements to prevent backup. They also will review the contractors' plans and estimates. Homeowners must sign an agreement if they want the improvements done.

Basement flooding must be directly attributed to overflow of the interceptor.

Backup program participants must document flooding at least once for each of the last three years. And basement elevation of the residence must be below the highest level of flow in the Farmington Interceptor based on Oakland County records.

Rain or shine, the girls are carefree in raincoats with zip-out linings of polyester polar fleeco. Even the hood is detachable. Water-resistant vinyl. Left: Red/blue lining, or blue/red lining. Right: Hot pink/purple or purple/hot pink. Both, sizes 2T-4T, \$33; 4-6x, \$35.

**Jacobson's**