

Passed over for job, administrator sues schools for age discrimination

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

An assistant principal at Harrison High has brought an age discrimination lawsuit after being passed over for the school's principal position.

Norman Dickson, 55, contends age played a role in his not being interviewed or selected for the job. Rando Horn was hired to succeed Harrison principal Clayton Graham, who retired in June.

The suit filed in Oakland County Circuit Court names the Farmington Public School District, Board of Education and Superintendent Michael Flanagan as defendants. A hearing date has not been set.

Dickson is asking in excess of \$10,000 damages and for the court to appoint him principal.

"It is our understanding that Mr. Dickson was as qualified, if not more qualified, than those people interviewed," said Dickson's attorney, Jamil Akhtar. "He should have passed the screening committee and should have gone on to the interview process."

Dickson has worked for the Farmington Public School District since 1969. Dickson, who

has a Ph.D., was hired as a teacher and has served as assistant principal at all three high schools in the district.

According to Akhtar, Dickson has served on numerous committees and panels and is considered an "expert in the educational community."

The suit also claims the Farmington School District violated the Freedom of Information Act and the Burdick-Plawewski Employee Right to Know Act when requesting information.

A school official denies the charges. "I'm going to let the system speak for itself," said Superintendent Michael Flanagan. "He's applied with many different committees, many different superintendents, many different structures for years and years, and hasn't been appointed principal."

"So the collective wisdom of all those many different committees have come to the con-

clusion he wasn't the person to lead that particular building."

Dickson could not be reached for comment. Akhtar said he wasn't sure if Dickson has previously applied for other openings in the district.

A screening committee, which includes a teacher, a member of the Farmington Association of School Administrators, and employee relations director or personnel director, looks over applications. The teacher representatives are picked by other teachers.

The field is narrowed down and candidates names are forwarded to an interviewing committee. The committee includes representatives from the building's teachers, parents, FASA, Central Office and either the employee relations director or personnel director.

The committee then recommends candidates to the superintendent, who makes the final decision.

"It doesn't make sense when you have all these different constituents appointing people that somehow they all got together and conspired," Flanagan said.

More than 60 candidates applied for the principal job at



Norman Dickson

Harrison. According to the suit, six names were selected to be interviewed. Dickson was not one of them.

Also, the district hired another principal during the same time at another school who is nearly the same age as Dickson.

The suit contends Dickson suffered "embarrassment, humiliation, outrage and mental anguish" due to gross negligence.

"We just feel the superintendent was negligent in the manner in which he conducted the search," Akhtar said, "and the manner in which he did was discriminatory."

Tax cut from page 1A

Flanagan said he immediately put in calls to legislators after the vote, wanting to know how the state intends to pay for education.

Flanagan said he received a return message from Sen. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, whose district includes part of Farmington. Honigman assured him that the schools will still be in business.

Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, voted no on the bill cutting property taxes. State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, voted yes.

Dolan admitted Wednesday after the vote she did not have a clue as to how the \$5.6 billion would be made up. She does favor some of it coming from the income tax.

But Dolan emphasized, "We're not going to shut down the schools. That's not going to happen."

That's of little solace to someone like assistant superintendent for finance Bruce Barrett.

Barrett said he was stunned at the news, and has "profound anxiety" about what plans the legislature will devise.

"I see a lot of sharks circling the waters at this point," Barrett said. "A lot of people have expressed a lot of views on how

school district funding should be changed. They feel they can construct an entirely new system from the ground up and solve everybody's problems."

"And that is absolutely naive."

Time is of the essence.

This school year runs until the end of June 1994. Unless a plan is in place, though, Farmington schools would be out of money by then.

The irony is Farmington voters passed a consolidated three-year millage in February, which was designed to bring stability and offer an opportunity for long-range planning.

The approved \$31.1 million — one-third of the schools' operating budget — is washed out.

"There is absolutely no ability to predict right now," Barrett said. "Zero predictability. All of our financial forecasting and wanting to plan on a long-term basis is in the waste basket until further notice."

The schools are not alone, though.

For example, the Farmington Downtown Development Authority loses money on its tax increment financing. The DDA captures a portion of tax revenues,

Man arraigned on sex charge

A man accused of criminal sexual conduct involving a 25-year-old Farmington Hills woman has pleaded not guilty.

Roy Vinson Starr, 33, of Cohocta, Mich., was arraigned Friday in 47th District Court on a charge of third-degree criminal sexual conduct.


His preliminary exam is scheduled for Friday, also in 47th District Court. The maximum prison sentence for third-degree criminal sexual conduct is 15 years.

The woman told police she, her

boyfriend and several friends had been partying July 19. The next morning, her boyfriend left for work, leaving her alone with Starr, she told police.

The woman's boyfriend called her and when she told him something was wrong, he called police who arrived at about 9 a.m. July 20 to the house in the Grand River/Middlebelt area. Police then arrested Starr.

The woman told police her attacker fondled her and exposed himself.



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WALKING ON CEMENT, GOING ON GRASS
If you have sore feet, you may have wondered if walking on cement caused your discomfort. Did the hard surface give your feet a pounding? Joggers feel that running on the street is hard on feet, while going on grass spares an otherwise inevitable ache.

Though such an association between surface and soreness is appealing, no data exists to prove it. If your feet are healthy, how they respond to a surface is a reflection of your shoes. If you walk on a hard surface, then thick soled shoes are best suited for your needs. If you are a runner, then everything on you, from shirt to shoes, is as lightweight as possible. To meet this goal, running shoes include thin padding, which in turn, responds better to a grass surface than an asphalt one.

In medical practice, arching feet most often represent an impairment in gait. The contours of the foot consists of bones curved in an arch and maintained that way by a host of ligaments and tendons. Inflammation or injury may fray these sinews and upset the balance among the bones. The result is a sore foot.

Before you treat sore feet by a renovation of your home or workplace, see your physician or podiatrist. They may find a flaw in your foot that represents a need to change your footwear or begin medical therapy.

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