

Schools exhaust all alternatives to create learning space for kids

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

After the third bond issue attempt in 16 months was defeated last February, Walled Lake school board members said they would exhaust all alternative space-creating measures before making a fourth try.

So far, they are following through on those words.

At Thursday's regular meeting at the Educational Service Center, board members unanimously approved schematic designs to add four classrooms to each of three buildings in time for the 1996-97 school year, authorized the \$240,000 purchase of 14.21 acres near Wixom-W. West Maple roads, potentially to build a smaller, K-1 elementary school.

"We don't have any choice," said school board president Cynthia Campion, about the additions. "This will give us additional classroom space for the fall of '96 and I think we're going to need every single classroom."

Concurring was trustee Marc Siegler. "This is something we said we were going to do" following the most recent bond issue defeat. "And this is just the start. We said we'd extend ourselves to every extreme before coming back for another bond issue."

Board member David Flammer said the approval of TMP's designs, presented in mid-August, did not automatically mean construction of additions to Keith Elementary, Wixom Elementary and the Twin Suns facility was a done deal. But he noted that final approval is likely.

"It's safe to assume that once we get the final designs back we'll

WALLED LAKE SCHOOLS

approve it," Flammer said.

The board, Thursday, did OK the following preliminary designs presented in mid-August by TMP Associates, Inc.:

■ Four classrooms, to be built on the west end of Keith Elementary, connecting two existing wings.

■ Four classrooms, added along the south side of Wixom Elementary.

■ Four 850-square-foot classrooms, to be built, and some existing rooms reconfigured, at the Twin Sun Facility. That would enable seven classrooms to be used as "surge space" for Walled Lake Middle School subjects such as math, English and social studies.

According to the district, the Keith and Wixom additions would cost \$650,000 and \$760,000 respectively. The Twin Sun project would fall between \$770,000-\$800,000. Out of the estimated \$2.2 million total cost, about \$2.1 million is available in the Public Improvement Fund; any remaining balance would be taken from the district's fund equity budget.

The decision to buy the 14-acre parcel was made during a closed, executive session later in the meeting. The money for the purchase will be taken from the district's land acquisition fund.

"It was good property, as far as buildability goes," Flammer said. "It was a decent price, close to the current Wixom Elementary. That would allow, at some point in the future, if we wanted to do a lower (K-1) building like West

Bloomfield did near Scotch."

Besides the property's proximity to Wixom Elementary, increasing enrollment in that part of the district also made the purchase a prudent one, Flammer said.

He added, however, that there is no timetable to actually build a school there.

Board Briefs: The board was scheduled to hold a Saturday study session. Among topics of discussion were to have been improving communication between board members and administrators and firming up details for the November millage election — such as whether to have another Saturday election.

"We will be discussing that (millage) at our next meeting (Sept. 21)," Campion said. "It will be a special school election. It will be an absolute renewal, about 18 mills for non-homestead and 4 mills for homestead."

No conflict

Vice-president Thomas McConnell said his being new PTA president at Walled Lake Elementary School would not pose a problem.

"I did some checking around to see if this might be a conflict of interest," McConnell said. "I called the state PTA and some administrators here, and I was told the only time it would be a conflict would be if there was a certain agenda item involving Walled Lake Elementary. Then I'd abstain from voting."

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