

Privileged information?

Resident attacks board on 'friends' list

Charges that the Walled Lake School District has used privileged information to compile a list of individuals who are favorable to millage increases were aired by Arthur Stokus at last week's school board meeting.

Stokus, a teacher at Walled Lake Western, told the board that district administrators had compiled a "friends' list" of individuals who would be favorable to the request for additional millage and made that list available to the committee working for passage of the millage increase.

Stokus also told the board he has requested a copy of the district's "master family census deck" under the Freedom of Information Act.

Residents in the western part of West Bloomfield live within the Walled Lake district.

The allegations lodged by Stokus were denied by Superintendent Don Sheldon who said the charges are "quite serious."

"I don't know what he's talking about when he refers to a 'friends' or 'enemies' list," said Sheldon. "The millage

committee has a list of parents of students in this district, but I don't see how a list of parents can be construed as an 'enemies' list."

Sheldon said the list included the names and addresses of all parents of students within the district unless those parents had specifically requested that their names be excluded from the list.

He added that any information made available to the pro-millage committee also would be available to Stokus.

STOKUS PREVIOUSLY was involved in legal proceedings against the district after he was denied access to a copy of the superintendent's contract.

Stokus filed charges the board had violated the Freedom of Information Act by refusing to provide him with a copy of the contract.

Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Francis O'Brien subsequently ruled that the contract is subject to public disclosure.

According to charges aired by Stokus and denied by Sheldon — at Monday's board meeting, the district used

"privileged information" contained in school records to determine which parents were in favor of the request for additional millage in an unsuccessful election in June.

He also charged that district administrators on school time had contacted teachers in an effort to learn which students have had positive expe-

riences in school and were likely to have parents who would vote in favor of a request for added millage.

After the meeting, Stokus acknowledged he is not certain whether there is in fact a "friends' list."

"But I do know that on school time a process of deduction was made about those individuals who would be favor-

able toward the millage and that privileged information was used to arrive at those deductions," Stokus said.

STOKUS INDICATED his allegations were similar to those brought against the Waterford Board of Education earlier this year.

In that case, a suit was filed against

the Waterford board and the "Kids Count in Waterford Committee."

As a result of that suit, Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Robert Templein issued a preliminary injunction against the defendants which prohibited them from receiving and storing a "friends' list."

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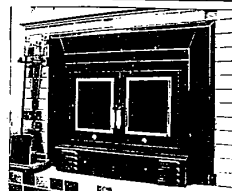
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