

Walled Lake voters asked to OK 4 mills

Faced with serious budget problems, the Walled Lake Board of Education will seek additional operating millage for the 1979-80 school year.

Forers of the Walled Lake School District will face a four-mills request in a special election Monday, April 24.

The Walled Lake District includes the western portion of West Bloomfield and the northwest section of Farmington Hills.

If approved, the additional millage

will enable the Walled Lake District to levy a total of 36.13 mills to cover operating expenses. The district currently levies 32.13 mills.

The request for four additional mills is limited to a one-year period. That means the board must come back to the voters for another election in order to extend the millage beyond the 1979-80 budget.

The decision to seek the additional millage was reached at a special school

board meeting March 14. The board earlier had discussed the district's financial difficulties at a weekend workshop in Plymouth and its regular board meeting on March 12.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Harry Carlson originally had projected a deficit of some \$940,000 in the 1979-80 budget.

That projected deficit did not include pay raises for district employees. All of the employee unions in the Walled

Lake District are scheduled to negotiate new wage scales for the upcoming year.

CARLSON ESTIMATED THAT A SEVEN percent increase for all district employees would exceed \$1 million.

With a projected state equalized valuation (SEV) of \$4.36 million, the Walled Lake District would have to levy an additional 2.158 mills to eliminate the projected \$940,000 deficit in the 1979-80 budget.

Carlson presented the school board

March 14 with a revised budget in which the projected deficit was trimmed to approximately \$48,300. As with the originally projected budget, the revised document does not include pay raises for school district employees.

Superintendent Don Sheldon said the projected deficit was reduced from \$940,000 to \$48,300 by increasing projected revenues and reducing projected expenditures.

"We've provided some very modest increases for supplies and utilities, but we'd be less than candid if I did not tell you that I have some very grave concerns about the expenditure which we have reduced," Sheldon stated.

"THE AMOUNT WE'VE BUDGETED FOR capital outlay has taken a shackling (from \$150,000 to \$25,000) and the amount we've budgeted for plant operations and maintenance (from \$2.83 million to \$2.64 million) is risky," stated Sheldon.

Sheldon also noted that the 1979-80 fiscal year will mark the third consecutive year in which the district has completed a deficit with a deficit budget.

Previously, the district was able to offset the deficit in operating expenses by dipping into its fund equity account. Now the fund equity account has been depleted to the point that school officials do not believe it is sufficient to cover a budget deficit for the third consecutive year.

Sheldon said a minimum of \$1.1 million in additional revenue was necessary for the district to cover its expenses in the 1979-80 school year. The district must levy 2.6 mills to cover a \$1.1 million deficit.

He added that a \$1.1 million figure involves "holding the line" on every item. It does not provide for any additions or improvements which the staff believes are important, said the superintendent.

Board President Betty Campion recommended that the board ask for more than the 2.6 mills needed to meet the projected need for \$1.1 million in additional revenue.

Trustee Robert Cooper opposed depleting the fund equity and said the board should ask for "new money." He suggested a figure of four mills was appropriate to the needs of the district.

COOPER ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE additional millage should be requested for no more than a one year period. He said that the district should have more specific information regarding state aid financing and the ramifications of the Headlee amendment at the end of one year.

Trustee Stephen Lasher submitted the motion to request the four additional mills for one year in a special election on April 26. The motion was unanimously endorsed by the board.

Court orders contract data release

Consolidated School District," she added.

The decision to release the document apparently was reached during an hour-long executive session to discuss litigation at a special board meeting March 14. Board Attorney Charles Fine was present during a portion of the executive session.

THE BOARD apparently discussed whether it would comply with an order handed down by Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Francis X. O'Brien to release the contract or appeal the decision during the executive session.

Fine had recommended that the meeting that Fine had attended be released, which was accepted by the board.

She did not reveal what the decision had been, stating only that the board "will respond according to the law."

The controversy regarding release of Sheldon's contract was initiated by a request for a copy of the document under the Freedom of Information Law from Arthur Stokus, a teacher at Walled Lake Western High School.

Stokus' request was denied by school administrators on the grounds that release of the document would constitute a "clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual's privacy." The administration's decision was supported by the school board at a meeting on December 11.

Stokus subsequently filed a complaint in circuit court and Judge O'Brien ruled March 7 the Freedom of Information Act requires the school district to release the contract.

The terms of the contract agree with a report on the contents of the document as reported by Trustee Leo Wessinger in December.

The only section of the contract not reported by Wessinger in December is a section which calls for the district to pay the superintendent's "hours and assigns" \$5,000 in the event of the

superintendent's death regardless of cause.

OTHER PROVISIONS IN THE contract call for the board to provide the superintendent with the following items:

• An annual salary of \$45,000 for each of the five years of the contract which runs through Dec. 31, 1983.

• Full retirement contributions to the Michigan Public School Employee Retirement fund based on the \$45,000 annual salary.

• \$5,000 per year to a tax deferred annuity program.

• \$100,000 life insurance policy.

• A \$25,000 "retirement income" life insurance policy.

• Long-term disability income protection insurance plan compatible with sick leave.

• 130 days of sick leave.

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