

Opinion

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Cotton, Ditzhazy best

FARMINGTON School District voters would be best served by voting for Jack Cotton and Helen Ditzhazy to fill two board of education seats on the June 10 ballot.

These candidates would provide the right mix of experienced leadership and educational initiative needed for the coming decade. They stand out in the field of 13 candidates seeking four-year terms.

The public is assured of two new faces because the incumbents didn't seek reelection.

COTTON SPENT a distinguished career as a Farmington School District administrator and now owns a travel agency. He has been recognized both on the state and local level for his leadership in bringing sports programs out of the dark ages of a "male only" club into the era of equality for all students.

He is a strong believer in "classless" education — a concept which demonstrates a more equal emphasis on all areas of education, rather than just favoring a few elite programs.

He is a strong decision maker, willing to stand his ground when in the right. He also has proven to be an astute politician, seeing the wisdom of compromise when it's needed.

More than any other candidate, Cotton has an in-depth understanding of this community. Voters can feel confident in

casting their ballots for him.

DITZHAZY CERTAINLY will add a spark of innovation which will be a positive and hopefully contagious ingredient. And she certainly has the qualifications to serve on a board.

Before taking the job as assistant superintendent of the Jackson Public Schools in 1983, Ditzhazy served as an administrative assistant in charge of instruction in the Novi district, where she also worked as a high school principal for six years. She has been an assistant principal and counselor in the South Redford district.

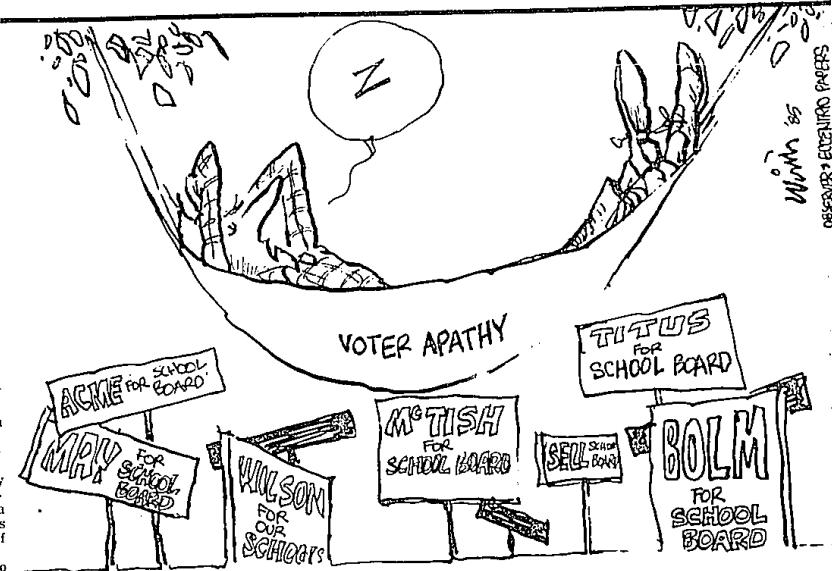
With background in several school other districts, Ditzhazy can add professional knowledge and insight can be a boon to the Farmington district.

She will bring to the Farmington school board a host of tried-and-true ideas used in other districts suffering from many of the same ills as Farmington.

Her track record includes dealing with declining enrollment, the need for upgraded educational programs and continual teacher training.

As a school board member, Ditzhazy would be well qualified to take on the educational challenges of keeping pace with a changing society. And she certainly seems willing to try new concepts and admit if they just don't work.

Most importantly, she is dedicated to maintaining excellence in education.



Educators pick the boards

WANT A HOT tip on who will win Monday's school board election in your district? Check which candidates your local education association — read "teachers' union" — are endorsing.

"We don't have any great, dark, deep ulterior motives or secrets like some people say we do," protests Bill Reese, president of the Wayne-Westland Education Association.

Carol Rundio, president of the Plymouth Education Association (PEA), is more candid. The PEA is looking for candidates who will "be favorable to the teachers and to other unions," she said. "We don't expect them to do all we want them to, but are they favorable and willing to listen?"

THE PROBLEM IS, with the kind of support some unions give, they may be expecting more than a ready ear.

In those cases, support through financial contributions or campaign workers is enough to make or break a candidate. Candidates know it.

"Some candidates want to be up front and say they are endorsed by us. Others don't want to use our name but do want workers," said John Hackett of the Birmingham Education Association.

Support in past years has ranged from allowing candidates to use the union name to donations and mailings, Hackett said. Candidates are given a choice.

TYPE OF SUPPORT varies widely be-



Sandra Armbruster
tween Michigan Education Association (MEA) affiliates.

Sunny Rubley Ruetenik, president of the Bloomfield Hills Education Association, said its political action committee (PAC) makes endorsements and informs the membership. No direct contributions are made to candidates, but mailings to selected people in the district are paid for by the PAC.

School board elections have the "most immediate, direct impact on the working lives of members, and I can't think of a better reason to be involved," Rubley Ruetenik said.

Jim Carlson of the Livonia Education Association (LEA) said that a PAC representing all unions in the district makes donations of \$300-\$500. Mailings and donations to fund-raisers also are made.

PERHAPS THE worst case of influence peddling is in the Wayne-Westland school district, where political involvement of union groups has gone beyond the WWAEA.

Candidates there receive anywhere from \$300 to \$600 from WWAEA alone. Adding another \$500 for each of three

candidates it's endorsing is the Wayne-Westland Building Administrators Association.

WWBAA members are being asked to identify "positive voters" and to send out 100 post cards each. They also are asked to "Have volunteer teachers or PTA members call from their homes (on election day) to insure a high voter turnout."

"If your building representative refuses (sic) or will not cooperate in the planning of the support of these candidates, please call me," says a memo from a WWBAA co-president.

It gets worse. Two senior citizen clubs, sponsored by the school district and meeting in a taxpayer-funded school building, were permitted by school officials to campaign for the same three candidates supported by the unions. The supervisor of the program, however, was reprimanded for campaigning during working hours.

HAVE THOSE who don't vote, or who don't take a critical look at candidates and their endorsements, surrendered their voting rights?

"Educators do most of the voting," answered a spokeswoman for the Farmington Education Association.

But the impact of union support goes far beyond election day. Think about that the next time a union contract comes up for renewal.

Better yet, think about it Monday when you vote.

SEMTA looks abandoned

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority is on its last wheels.

Funding and service have declined since 1981, and now the SEMTA management warns that service will have to be halted entirely unless new funds are forthcoming.

Federal subsidies may be out. The Reagan administration is not interested in providing operating subsidies for transit.

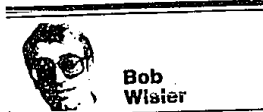
SEMTA officials repeatedly claim that a new area tax is necessary to keep SEMTA vehicles rolling. Most frequently mentioned is a 1 percent increase in the sales tax, which would have to be approved by voters.

Legislators and key local and state government officials have been reluctant even to put such an issue on the ballot, sensing little support for a tax increase for a service which the majority of their constituents would not use.

Now there is a movement afoot to form a new area transit authority, one which would oversee separate operations in Detroit and the suburbs, hiring a mix of public and private operators.

Many government officials feel this kind of arrangement will be the only way public transportation can survive.

THE INABILITY of SEMTA to negotiate a merger with the Detroit Depart-



Bob Wisier
ment of Transportation bus system (D-DOT) is frequently mentioned as one reason for reorganizing public transit.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young is usually portrayed as the heavy who refuses to give up his bus system.

The reasons for the present faltering SEMTA operation are many and varied, but to portray Young as the chief glitch is not quite accurate.

Public transportation was riding high in the Ford and Carter years. Federal money kept pouring in.

SEMTA provided new vehicles for D-DOT, rush-hour bus service in and out of the central city and a number of dial-a-ride-type programs for suburban elderly and handicapped.

AT ONE POINT it appeared that SEMTA would adopt a meaningful transit plan for the metropolitan area. The plan called for construction of a light-rail system along the Woodward corridor from Detroit to Pontiac, alias "the subway."

Suburban interests, mainly in Oakland and Macomb county, vociferously argued against spending any money for the light-rail system. Years of wrangling ensued that the plan would never be put into effect. This wrangling, as much as anything else, led to the present state of torpor.

Meanwhile, Young steadfastly refused to have SEMTA absorb D-DOT. Young has shown a consistent reluctance to cooperate with anything that would make it easier for people to move to the suburbs. He has deplored freeways and sewer expansion. It would be natural for him to oppose a transit system which would enable commuters to whiz in and out of the city.

With these problems and with the general aid declining, SEMTA has been crumbling.

THERE IS NOT enough public demand for public transportation, especially in the suburbs where every family has three cars and most workers drive alone to jobs.

The public's interest in mass transit died soon after it became apparent that the world was not running out of oil, that car companies were going to build cars that consumed less gasoline, that the OPEC cartel could not go on raising prices willy-nilly forever and that gasoline prices would level off at what most people feel as an affordable level.

New terms for Burley, Sarris

THERE IS no good reason to replace incumbents Michael W. Burley or Sharon L. Sarris on the Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees June 10. Quite the contrary: They have made such a good case for reelection that most challengers have backed off.

The board isn't always unanimous, but there is a consensus without deep divisions. The trustees like President Richard McDowell because he has delivered what they wanted and what he promised: "out-reach" programs to industry and commerce, a marketing effort to retain students, a quiet but highly effective program to promote women into management, successful collective bargaining, improving efforts to raise private funds.

The board, as Sarris puts it, works as a team. Everything takes four votes. No one trustee tries to hog credit.

BURLEY HAS overcome our well-considered aversion to seeing an educator from one district serve on the board of another. A Northville teacher, Burley thinks in managerial terms and gives no evidence of trying to second-guess the Schoolcraft administration. He is an objective thinker. He is fair. As chairman the last two years, the Canton resident has used the position with as even hand. He deserves a second six-year term.

Sarris, too, was a teacher but again gives no evidence of trying to second-guess the administration. Now a member of General Motors management, the Livonia resident delves deeply into the processes of board teamwork.

Not only does she deserve reelection, but her political party (Democrat) should consider running Sarris for the state Board of Education one of these years.

CHALLENGER Hussein S. (Hank) Karzun, a Ford engineer from Livonia, has virtually no differences with the board. Most of the things he considers "new ideas" are already being implemented — an indication he is on the same wave length as the incumbents.

A warning to everyone: Incumbents have a tendency to dodge questions about raising taxes, and Burley and Sarris have dodged well. But it's crystal clear that McDowell and Vice President W. Kenneth Lindner see no way around a millage vote in 1996.

McDowell and Lindner are right. All the new vocational programs, all the high-tech programs, all equipment needs, all the roof repair need add up to one thing — a modest millage request for capital expenditures, preferably for a limited time period. The trustees should face it.

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