

Out of formula

Districts without state aid join together to voice concerns

By Neal Haldane
staff writer

SCHOOL DISTRICTS in this area have joined together to create a louder voice in Lansing.

They speak through the Michigan Out-of-Formula District Association (MOFDA).

The association began five years ago when four districts — Southfield, Birmingham, Troy and Ann Arbor — decided to band together to fight for those districts which do not receive state aid, according to Ronald Rohman, associate superintendent in Southfield.

"We felt the story of out-of-formula districts wasn't being told to legislators," Rohman said. "Many didn't even go to Lansing because they felt it was a waste of time."

Since then, the organization has grown to include 91 school districts including the original founders along with Bloomfield Hills, Farmington and West Bloomfield. The 91 represents about half of all out-of-formula districts in Michigan.

"The response by those districts indicates they feel the association is a benefit to Michigan education and not just for out-of-formula districts," said W. Robert Docking, Bloomfield Hills superintendent and MOFDA chairman.

"THE ASSOCIATION is very important," said Roger Garvelink, Birmingham superintendent and member of the MOFDA executive committee. "The number one goal is to have more money for all public schools in Michigan."

"Two-thirds of the 128 K-12 school districts receive state aid, Docking said. (See related story.)"

"We were not formed to take money away from in-formula districts," he said. "We attempt to protect the money we do receive from the state but not at the expense of the in-formula districts."

Out-of-formula school districts do receive some money from the state in the form of categorical grants which partially fund transportation, special education and other special programs.

But even that small amount of money has been cut in recent years, Docking said.

To fight for out-of-formula districts and education in general, MOFDA employs a part-time executive director and a part-time lobbyist along with a secretary.

The proposed MOFDA budget for the school year is \$96,000, according to

Leslie Wesman, executive director.

"And that includes all of our expenses, meetings, communication, all of that," Wesman said.

The money to fund those efforts comes from the districts which pay 35 cents per pupil to belong, Wesman said.

IN ADDITION to that paid staff, MOFDA members are split up into various committees which research and recommend positions, Docking said.

Two major areas of concern are top priority for MOFDA, he said.

The first concern involves tax abatements. General Motors' efforts to cut back property tax payments strikes at the heart of out-of-formula districts because almost all funding comes from the property tax, Docking said.

In these appeals, school districts do not have the same representation as the city or county, even though the schools receive more property taxes than those governmental units.

Pending legislation, sponsored by Rep. Marlene Berman, D-Southfield, would give districts more of a voice in the appeal process.

MOFDA is actively backing that legislation, Docking said.

The second major area of concern is possible changes in the way education is funded in Michigan, Docking said. A MOFDA committee is keeping close tabs on legislators as they examine alternatives to the property tax funding system.

One plan would shift emphasis on education funding from the property tax to the sales tax. That idea would be bad for all districts, Docking said.

"MICHIGAN has a cyclical economy which has kept our revenue," he said. "During the recession, school districts would have gotten hammered more than they did. Property taxes are not that cyclical."

As the Michigan economy improves, more money is being funneled into education, Docking said.

"There has been a massive infusion of money in education under the Bianchard administration but virtually none of that money has come into out-of-formula districts. In fact, things have gone the other way."

MOFDA members also bristle at references to being rich districts because some members are facing hard times, Docking said.

Traverse City, for example, is an



The lack of state aid and the need to preserve local property taxes has prompted the Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Farmington,

Southfield, Troy and West Bloomfield school districts to join the Michigan Out-of-Formula School District Association.

out-of-formula district which cannot get a millage passed, he said.

Other districts have had to cut back to five hours a day along with increasing class sizes, Docking said.

Southfield's Rohman takes another view of the importance of out-of-formula districts.

"We're lighthouse districts," he said. "We can serve as a model for public education because this is what we ought to be."

Nolous to remove excess funding from out-of-formula districts to give to in-formula systems would give all districts the same amount of money to spend on education, Rohman said.

"But then you'd have total mediocrity."

How state calculates aid

The Michigan Department of Education determines how much money, if any, local school districts should receive from the state based on a mathematical formula.

Douglas Roberts, deputy superintendent for the state, said the per-pupil formula in 1984-85 is \$328 plus \$64 times the number of mills the district levies.

For example, Roberts said, take a district that levies 30 mills (\$30 per \$1,000 of State Equalized Value). Based on that formula, the district would receive \$328 plus \$1,920 (30

mills times \$64) for a total of \$2,248 per pupil.

Now if that district had \$50,000 of SEV for every pupil, it would generate \$1,500 (\$50,000 times 30 mills) in local property taxes.

That would leave the district \$748 short of what the state aid formula allows (\$2,248 minus \$1,500).

The state would then step in and give the school district \$748 per pupil, Roberts said. That district would then be considered in-formula.

Now if that district had \$100,000 of SEV for every pupil, \$3,000 in local property taxes would be generated.

Since that figure is higher than the \$2,248 state number, the district would receive state funding and would be considered out of formula, Roberts said.

Using the formula, the Southfield, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Troy, Farmington and West Bloomfield school districts would all be out of formula.

In the 1985-86 school year, the state aid formula will be adjusted upward with \$331.35 plus \$68.50 times the number of mills as the new figures, Roberts said.

cop calls

BIG HEIST: Valuable jewelry and stereo components valued together at \$16,550 were stolen from a home on Middlebelt in Farmington Hills sometime Wednesday during the day.

A tool was used to slice a screen window on the west side of the house, gaining the thief entry through the bathroom window.

A stereo receiver, cassette deck, equalizer, and several suitcases were stolen, as well as more than 10 pieces of jewelry including men's and women's rings and necklaces, and women's earrings and bracelets.

Numerous diamonds and rubies, a pear-shaped opal, and a pink sapphire are among the stolen gems. Police have no suspects.

ASSAULT ARREST: A man was arrested on an assault and battery charge after allegedly attacking the owner of the Collision Shop on 20785 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills.

Gilberto Pietrandrea and his wife reportedly drove into the Collision Shop parking lot in a Chevrolet Corvette at approximately 4:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Pietrandrea entered the shop to ask for a receipt for a 1984 Buick for work done on his father's GMC Sierra, he said.

The owner would not supply a receipt until after the money was paid up front.

The accused allegedly became irate and struck the owner with his fist, knocking him out of his chair to the floor and kicking him, police said.

The victim struggled, got away, and ran

outside for the keys of the Sierra. Pietrandrea allegedly ran after the owner, caught him, knocked him down, and started hitting and choking him.

After several minutes, Pietrandrea's wife tried to separate the two men.

The owner ran back into his shop for safety, called police and locked the door.

When Farmington Hills police officer Jerry Lynch arrived at the scene, Pietrandrea was yelling and screaming outside the shop's door.

The owner unlocked the shop door for Lynch, and Pietrandrea ran into the store still screaming, police said.

Lynch separated the two once more. The subject said the owner had started the fighting. Pietrandrea had no physical marks of being attacked. The victim had scrape marks, and bleeding elbows.

Pietrandrea's wife said she didn't know who started the fight.

Pietrandrea was arrested at the scene.

MISSING BREW: A case of beer was taken from the T.E. Eleven store shortly before 2 a.m. Wednesday morning.

A young man allegedly picked up a case of beer, approached the check-out counter, and said to the store clerk, "You're giving this away tonight." He then ran out the door.

Farmington Hills police Lt. Jack Brown observed the subject running to a car parked in the adjacent vacant gas station, with another subject behind. Both subjects

were subsequently arrested for larceny under \$100 from a building and the car impounded.

REX-FIN: A vacant house and garage on 31990 Highview in Farmington Hills was broken into with a tool between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday.

Suspects entered the attached garage through an open sliding window and removed a garage opener and control from their mounts.

The front door of the house was broken into and fans were pulled from the ceiling.

Police have no suspects for the \$250 damage and the property valued at \$350.

DOUBLE TROUBLE: The second theft in four days from a residence on 29999 Barwell in Farmington Hills occurred sometime early Tuesday morning.

Suspects entered the house through an unlocked dining room door and took a stereo cassette deck off the dining room table, as well as two women's purses from the kitchen.

The stolen property is valued at \$290. On Aug. 31, several items were stolen from the garage at the same residence. Police have no suspects.

LUMBER LOOTED: Plywood lumber valued at \$500 was stolen from a construction site on 3873 Lancaster in Farmington Hills early in the morning Sept. 1.

The builder requested increased police patrolling of the area in the early morning and late evening. Police have no suspects.

obituaries

HAZEN F. NELSON

Mr. Nelson, 63, of Farmington Hills died Aug. 24.

Mr. Nelson was a tile setter. He was a World War II Air Force veteran.

Survivors include his sons, Craig, Cameron, Carl and Clark; a daughter, Cheryl Rapke; sisters, Ruby Edgar and Opal Quirk; seven grandchildren.

Services were Aug. 29 at the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, Farmington, with the Rev. Thomas A. Scherger of Spirit of Christ Lutheran Church officiating. Cremation was in Evergreen Cemetery, Detroit. Memorials may be made to the Childrens Hospital of Michigan.

LEONA NORMA BRETZLOFF

Mrs. Bretzloff, 64, of Farmington Hills died Aug. 24.

Mrs. Bretzloff was a homemaker.

Survivors include her husband, Lawrence; sons, Richard, William, Robert, Donnie and Thomas; daughters, Diane Cook, Beverly

Gales, Darlene Happ and Audrey Murphy; sisters, Charlotte Handolph and Lorraine Frankovic; brother, Robert Kouth; 19 grandchildren.

Services were Aug. 28 in the Manns-Ferguson Funeral Home, Livonia, with the Rev. Raymond Troutman officiating. Burial was in Glen Eden Cemetery, Livonia.

FLORENCE STELLA KOSTURKO

Mrs. Kosturko, 59, of Farmington Hills died Aug. 28.

Mrs. Kosturko was a machine operator. Survivors include her husband, David; sons Terry Dye, David, Steven, Richard and Paul; daughter Patricia Hamilton; and mother Sandra Erickson; sisters Helen George and Margaret Redmond; brother, Michael Matejak; and five grandchildren.

Services were Aug. 29 at the Manns-Ferguson Funeral Home, Livonia. Mass was celebrated at St. Alexander Catholic Church with the Rev. James Wright officiating. Burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Southfield.

KENNETH A. HAGSTROM

Mr. Hagstrom, 23, of Novi died Aug. 30 in Ford Hospital, Detroit.

Mr. Hagstrom was a mechanic for Julius Rose Moving Co.

Survivors include his wife, Diane; a daughter, April Lynn; parents, Harold and Geraldine Hagstrom; sister, Wilma Miller; brother, Michael; grandmothers, Delia Erickson and Cecyl Hagstrom.

Services were Sept. 3 at the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, Farmington, with the Rev. Carl Schultz officiating. Burial was in Oakland Hills Cemetery, Novi.

DOUGLAS EUGENE CARLSON

Mr. Carlson, 55, of Redford died Sept. 3 in St. Mary Hospital, Livonia.

Mr. Carlson was an electrician. Survivors include his wife, Shirley; sons, Bruce, Brian and Scott; daughters, Linda and Sandra; brother, Clayton Carlson.

Services were Sept. 5 at the Healey-Sandquist Funeral Home, Farmington, with the Rev. Victor F. Halboth Jr. officiating.

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