

Party moved

Mercy High School reacts to Dearborn park law

By Casey Hans
staff writer

The movement of a Mercy High School holiday dance from Dearborn's Fairlane Manor to the Southfield Hilton last week was viewed by some as a student-body political statement.

School administration and one involved student said the statement was one of "concern for student feelings."

The decision raised "scorn on one side and praise on the other," according to Mercy High School Associate Principal William Gervais. "We felt it was an issue of human dignity."

The location move and date change from Dec. 22 to Dec. 23 was announced to the approximately 1,100-member student body Wednesday morning, Dec. 11. The decision followed several student meetings, two involving 70-100

students, and one giving information from the NAACP, according to Gervais. The NAACP representative was "completely objective" in his presentation, Gervais added.

THE DANCE was booked for the Dearborn facility last March and a \$800 deposit of student-earned money was paid with the contract, Gervais said. The school will reportedly not get the money back.

School administrators made the final decision based on student input, according to Gervais. "There was a concern about some of the students feeling unwelcomed."

A "racially-mixed" student group at Mercy became concerned several weeks ago following passage of a Dearborn ordinance prohibiting non-residents from using city parks, Gervais said.

"We felt it was an issue of human dignity."

— William Gervais
Associate Principal, Mercy High School,
Farmington Hills

Groups such as the Michigan NAACP and ACLU view the ordinance as racist and have filed suit to overturn the ban. Because of the situation, some students "felt uncomfortable attending" their function in Dearborn, he added.

Gervais stressed the situation "wasn't a race issue," noting there were white and black students taking both sides. Recent news reports of 200 enrolled black students at the school

are "a little high," he added.

"We realized we had a concern that couldn't be ignored," according to Mercy senior Paula Abowd, a member of the school's activities committee, which plans the annual dance. "It came down to a compromise — both sides had to give a little."

FARMINGTON HILLS resident and Mercy parent Ronald Bebes felt a right

had been taken away from his daughter, a Mercy junior who had planned to attend the dance, but now cannot.

"They have crammed a political situation down her throat," he said. "It is now public knowledge the students have chosen to boycott. They've made her part of this, and I don't believe they have the right."

Bebes called the student function an "elite dance," which all juniors and seniors "look forward to." Attendance is limited to junior and senior students. Abowd expects the dance to be filled to capacity, which could include 600 students and dates.

She said many students "went out of their way to change their plans," in order to attend the dance.



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Eagle site plans approved

Farmington school trustees voiced approval Dec. 2 for a new Eagle Elementary media center at 14 Mile Middlebelt in West Bloomfield Township.

Work on the addition west of the gymnasium will begin "as soon as the bids come back," according to Jack Lawing, director of administrative services for the district.

Administrators are aiming for a Sept. 1 completion date, but realistically expect completion several months into the 1986-87 school year, superintendent Lewis Schulman said.

NEW PROJECT estimates were set at \$341,872 by Lawing for "total construction cost without furniture." Original plan estimates came in under \$300,000. Furniture and fixture costs were estimated at approximately \$35,000 by Building and Site Committee members.

The center will be funded with money received from the sale of property at 12 Mile and Drake to Little Caesar's International. Development is based on

a prototype of other media centers in the district.

Decisions have not been completed exterior building materials. Information will be brought to the board as it becomes available.

REVISED PLANS were reviewed by board members at a committee meeting prior to the Dec. 3, board meeting. Recommendation came to the board via committee chairman and trustee James Abernathy. The board's decision was unanimous.

Preliminary plans were reviewed by committee members one month ago. Revisions include adding 960 square feet to the center.

Space in the new media center allows use of the former center for two full classrooms, and possibly a third, according to Lawrence Freedman, assistant superintendent for instruction.

This is important, because additional students are expected to attend Eagle next year, according to information projected by the district's boundary study committee, he said.

"MINOR BOUNDARY shifts" are expected to affect filled-to-capacity schools such as Woodcreek and Longacre elementaries. The committee's five-year boundary projections are expected to be released early in 1986, Freedman said. "We have always given people reasonable notice whenever there is any type of boundary change."

Orientation to the new schools is also provided, he added.

Energy issues for the school addition were stressed by Abernathy, who discussed potential ventilation problems and questioned building materials.

Lawing said energy issues "had been discussed at length. We're determined to make this one (media center) better."

Media center plans show a large, central area, two conference rooms, computer facilities, a gym office, a reading room and much-needed audiovisual storage. About 50 aides and teachers will staff the center.

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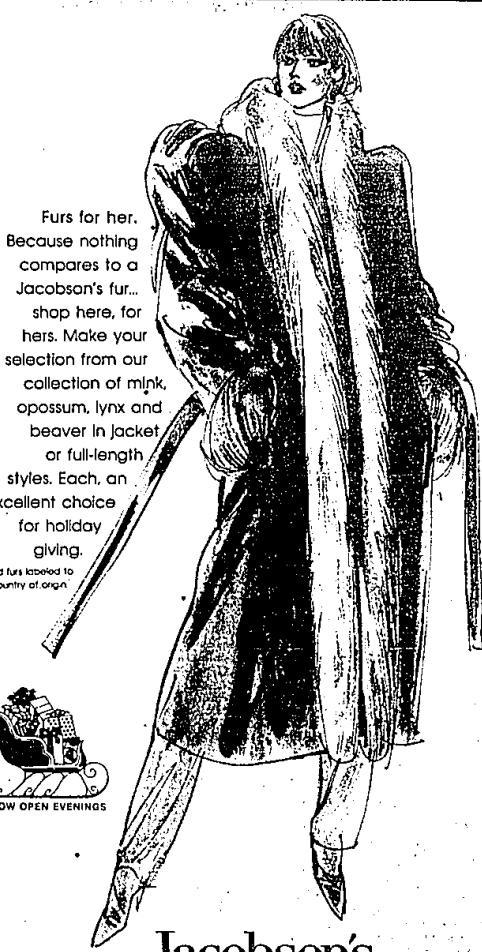
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