

# Schools to improve communication efforts

**By Casey Hans**  
staff writer.

Farmington Public Schools minutes, financial reports, newsletters and a book containing school board policies are now available at the Farmington Hills branch of the Farmington Community Library.

The district will also make an effort to better communicate with the public by posting regular business hours and keeping School/Community Forum meetings open to the public.

The possibility of cablecasting board meetings was put "on the back burner" because it was thought to be

a large expense.

Meanwhile, the parent who suggested the changes said he experienced better communication since Michael Flanagan took over as acting superintendent in June.

"Since then, I've had the need to discuss something with Mr. Flanagan," said Lorne Leon. "I've noticed quite a bit of change — more accessibility."

Communication-related issues were discussed at a September meeting of the board's committee. The district plans to make the changes as quickly as possible, said Elizabeth Weisenberg of the superintendent's office.

In the past, such documents were only available at the school district's central offices. The public can continue to view them there.

BUT SEVERAL board members felt the two branches of the Farmington Community Library might allow the public better access to such records during non-business hours.

Library director Beverly Papal said the school district has already sent a policy book and has begun sending minutes and other materials. They will be kept in the reference section of the Hills branch, on 12 Mile at Kendallwood.

Public use of the records and the content of the materials will deter-

mine how long the library keeps them on the shelves, Papal said. There is the possibility they could be added to the Farmington History Collection.

The issue of more openness and better communication with the public was raised in mid-June by Leon, who suggested the board keep documents in the library, consider cablecasting of minutes, videotaping board meetings for future viewing, adopting regular evening and weekend hours at central office and holding a town meeting every 3-6 months.

Similar suggestions were aired during school board races last spring.

THE BOARD committee discussed all of these options. Cablecasting meetings was not a popular one.

"I think it's a bad idea," said trustee Janice Rolnick. "I think it would do more harm than good."

Trustee Helen Dilshary called it a "big expense," although she said she had served on boards that used cable. "It sounds like this is on the back burner, with the possibility of presentation through Channel 10 (education cable channel)," said trustee Jack Colton, communication committee chairman.

Regarding special hours of opera-

tion at the central office, Flanagan said he thought it could best be handled by posting business hours on the door and by administrators making themselves available for special meetings at parental request.

"I would say most administrators spend many hours beyond the 40-hour week," he said. "I think you'd also find people in central office, in most cases, here until 6 p.m. and some much later than that."

Assistant superintendent Lynn Nutter said he has often met with parents after hours. "I've always felt we're available," he said, "that's been the spirit of the administrators."

# Michigan's miniature gold rush had a slow start

**By David Litogot**  
special writer

In early fall 1845, Douglas Houghton was camped at the mouth of the Chocolate River in Michigan Territory's Upper Peninsula.

With his pick, he roamed the landscape, scouting for interesting ore samples. He expected to find copper, perhaps some iron. What he did find surely surprised him and his fellow geologists. Gold! Flecks of gold were discovered in some quartz samples he found.

Houghton had little opportunity to tell many people. On Oct. 13, 1845, he drowned near Eagle River. His notes of his Upper Peninsula expeditions were believed to have been lost.

Only eight years before, Dr. Houghton was appointed state geologist. He spent the summers of 1843, 1844 and 1845 exploring the Upper Peninsula on a geologic survey. The land was newly acquired by treaty with the Indians and a new survey was needed.

Houghton had already found extensive copper deposits along the Lake Superior shoreline and was expecting the same ore to be found throughout the region. But this region near present-day Negaunee bore a different kind of yellow ore: gold.

THERE WAS no gold rush. Copper was the real attraction of the mining

companies. Iron was also in demand. Perhaps most mining companies felt that either the stories were untrue or the quantity of gold was not sufficient to warrant expensive searches and mining. Whatever the case, little gold prospecting took place until 1884.

In that year, the Holyoke Silver mine found some gold mixed in with its ore deposits. Somehow, reports of the find escaped public notice.

On May 17, 1881, Julius Ropes of Ishpeming was prospecting outside of town. He was a trained chemist and recognized a vein of quartz rich in gold. This discovery led to the operation of the first gold mine in Michigan.

The Ropes Gold and Silver Mine Co. was not only the first but also the largest of the mines that operated in the state. It employed 60 men at one time from 1882-97. More than \$600,000 in gold and silver was produced from the mine, with shafts reaching a depth of 850 feet.

The gold found was associated with galena, iron pyrite and copper ore. When the mine closed in the early 1900s, huge mounds of ore-bearing quartz were left behind. When the price of gold increased in the 1930s, many prospectors worked these tailings and made good wages.

LESS THAN 12 miles from the Ropes Mine was the Michigan Gold Mining Co. operation. It started in 1887 and produced \$90,000 worth of

gold. In 1932, another \$8,000 was produced from the reopened mine.

Other mining companies also got involved in the 1880s. Some of the names on record are: Gold Lake, Superior, Peninsula, Grayling, Fire Center, Washburn, Gitchelgamme, Brown, Case and Swains. Some of these operations found veins rich in gold while others were unprofitable.

Like iron and copper mining, the occupation itself was very dangerous. In 1926 at the Barnes-Hecker Mine, nine miles east of Ropes, a disaster occurred. Fifty-two men were trapped 1,000 feet below ground. The bodies were never recovered and the company sealed the shaft and moved the machinery to another location, leaving the miners entombed in the mine.

Processing the gold ore itself was very expensive. Many of the veins pinched out. The price of gold was unstable. More money could be made in the iron and copper fields. The area was far from civilization and few Americans were interested in mining at the time. Thus, immigrants were invited in and to this day, the Upper Peninsula is rich in German, Scandinavian, Scotch, Irish and English names and traditions.

THE GLACIERS scraped through the Upper Peninsula thousands of years ago and carried down bits of that ancient gold lode. In dozens of counties in the Lower Peninsula, gold has been found in the glacial drift.

**footprints in history**

The only piece I own was bought in a piece of quartz in Michigan mining. The souvenir was produced at the

Ropes mine, reopened in 1985 to produce these tourist treasures. Those Journals of Dr. Houghton, by the way, were "discovered" at an auction in New York in 1972. The

seven leather-bound notebooks were bought by John Cumming of the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University. The notes contained maps, sketches and manuscripts. They are now "home" in Michigan, where they belong.

The writer is a Farmington Historical Society member and a history teacher at Wooddale Elementary in Farmington Hills.

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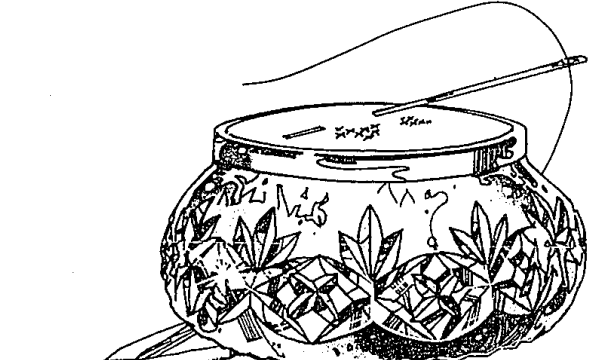
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