

C'ville to buy radios for buses

By Marie Chestney
staff writer

world," said Gail Silvernall, a bus driver.

No one knows the experience of being trapped on an expressway with 40-60 kids and you're praying the person who helps you is not carrying a Colt 45, and I don't mean beer.

"We take a chance if we leave the bus (to make a phone call). We're responsible for every life on that bus. If some demented person gets on the bus, I have my tire iron. Whoopee."

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CLARENCEVILLE IS the only area district without radios in its buses, school officials said.

All Livonia Public School buses were equipped with radios several years ago, said Steven Woodworth, transportation supervisor for that district.

"They're a terrific asset," he said. "If a bus breaks down, the driver calls the school and school workers are not left scratching their heads when parents call and ask where their kid is."

Both Skrocki and Montecillo rec-

ommended buying the radios. "Nothing could be as important as this," Montecillo said. "This would be on the top of my wish list."

By a voice vote, with a couple of "no's" heard, the trustees approved buying the radios. They should be installed within the next two months.

BUT THE request nearly got tabled because it had the bad fortune of being preceded by the financial report.

The report indicated the district might lose a significant amount of money in its 1990-91 budget if the state stops paying the district's portion of Social Security for its employees.

For Livonia Public Schools, this means a loss of \$4 million. For the much-smaller Clarenceville district,

it means a loss of \$438,000.

THIS FINANCIAL news made the trustees cautious about spending money until the district prioritized its needs on a "wish list," they said.

"I see the need but we have a need for other things, too," said trustee Richard Wood. "The science labs need to be brought up to date."

A numbered "wish list" would show whether radios were number 40 on the list or number three, trustee Vernice Dunklee said.

Board president Linda Brandemihl backed the radios, saying buses break down often, leaving students stranded on the highway.

Drivers "can't leave the students so they sit and wait for help," she said. "This week, a bus engine blew up. The driver sat there 45 minutes before getting help."

member Jonathan Grant expect to open the meetings to the public. Before last Thursday's committee meeting, Grant said he intended to address the public meeting issue. Councilman Lawrence Lichtman also is a member.

"It would only be fair to mention we did invite the press," Sever said. "The feeling of the committee is that we will probably have the meetings open. We will avoid issues that would require closed meetings, such as land acquisitions, and that if discussed in public would weaken our ability to negotiate."

SEVER SAID many, including some council members, have misunderstood his purpose in proposing the ad hoc committee. "If I had wanted to be deceptive, I could have called John and Larry and said, 'I have these ideas, let's get together and discuss them,'" he said.

Sever said he raised the idea of forming an ad hoc committee at a study session of the city council Saturday, Jan. 20, and again when it was approved at a Monday, Jan. 22 meeting. "I raised the issue to the council because last year I was criticized for doing things on my own."

"This whole issue has definitely divided the whole council," he added.

ONLY MAYOR Jean Fox and councilman Aldo Vagnozzi opposed creation of the ad hoc committee. The remaining five council members supported the study group when it was formed Jan. 22.

Because the three-member committee is one member short of a quorum requiring public meetings, the group may meet, and has met twice, in meetings closed to the public. Both meetings have been open to the local press, including the Observer. Allowing the press to attend a meeting does not in itself constitute a public meeting.

Sever and fellow committee

Clarenceville

The district includes parts of Livonia, Redford and Farmington Hills.

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Sever and fellow committee

Panel's meetings likely to be open

Continued from Page 1

In a letter to homeowner associations, Farmington Hills resident Julieann Hovanestian also said the committee "with closed, private meetings, lends itself to much possible question on behalf of the public interest."

Sever disagrees. "It can't usurp the authority of the full council when five members of the council — a majority — agreed to it," Sever said.

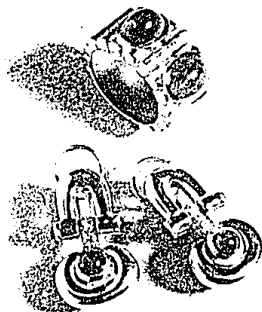
"My position is that the petition is a fraud and a misrepresentation of the facts. It is a misrepresentation to say it is a violation of the city charter. A majority of the council has a right to form a committee of their body," Sever continued.

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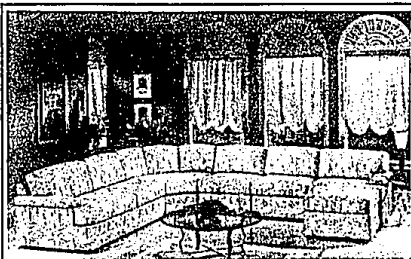
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