

Voters will consider Headlee override

By Darrell Clem
staff writer

Walled Lake School District voters will be asked in June to override a state-mandated tax rollback — a move school officials called necessary to avoid massive budget cuts. School trustees gave sweeping approval March 8 to a proposal from a citizens panel that recommended asking voters to override the Headlee amendment, which ties the inflation rate the amount of new tax revenues a school district can collect.

No public opposition to the plan surfaced during the March 8 meeting. The district includes northwest Farmington Hills.

Superintendent James Gotsler warned school officials that convincing voters to approve the Headlee

override in the June 11 election will not be easy.

"I think we have to do a lot of educating within the community," he said. "We have our work cut out for us."

District voters rejected Headlee override proposals by large margins in 1987 and 1988.

The nine-member citizens panel called for the latest proposal March 1 in a three-year finance plan submitted to the school board at the end of a month-long study.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS warned that \$3.5 million could be slashed from next year's budget alone if the Headlee override fails. The latest budget is \$47.8 million.

School trustees blamed budget woes on a state school finance system that relies on property taxes.

Walled Lake School District

The Walled Lake district serves students in part of the north-west corner of Farmington Hills.

"The way the state has set up funding of education puts us in a box," said trustee Marc Belsky. Belsky also noted the school district has lost millions of dollars in would-be revenues to municipalities that legally diverted taxes to downtown development projects, prompting school officials to ask voters to help make up the losses.

"We're put in a position that we're the bad guys," Belsky said. Of the nine municipalities served by the Walled Lake district, Com-

merce Township and Wixom have launched downtown development projects, and the city of Walled Lake has initiated such efforts. Meanwhile, the school board expects to form a citizens committee

to campaign for passage of the Headlee override. Citizen involvement proved successful last year when the district sought approval of a \$47.8 million bond issue for new construction.

AMONG THE other highlights of the finance plan approved March 8:

- Add 14 new classrooms to existing buildings, in addition to 23 rooms already added and two new schools in the works.

- Keep the school district's tax rate at no more than 36 mills if voters approve the Headlee override, though the district's authorization would be up to 38.5 mills. A mill is \$1 in taxes per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation of property.

- Identify and make public the specific budget cuts that will be made if the override fails. Officials have indicated cuts could be made in classroom supplies, building repairs and the teacher work force, among other areas.

Meritorious service honored

Mercy Health Services of Farmington Hills named Joyce Brown-Hassen, this year's recipient of the Sister Mary Maurita Sengelaub Award for Meritorious Service.

The registered nurse was honored at a gathering of leaders from throughout the Mercy system in St. Petersburg Beach, Fla., on Feb. 22. The award is presented annually to a person in the system whose life reflects the compas-



sion and dedication of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy.

Brown-Hassen is the nurse specialist at Heartside Clinic, sponsored by Mercy's Saint Mary's Health Services in Grand Rapids. She was recognized for her work among the poor and homeless who come to the store-front clinic.

A graduate of Grand Valley State College with a bachelor's degree in nursing, Brown-Hassen serves on the boards of the Grand Rapids Urban League and the Kent County AIDS Council.

Heartside is funded by state and federal grants, with matching funds

and in-kind services provided by Saint Mary's. The clinic offers primary care, help with substance abuse, and AIDS counseling and testing services. Saint Mary's provides free laboratory, pharmacy, radiology and outpatient services to all Heartside clients.

Mercy Health Services is a Farmington Hills based non-profit multi-hospital health care system sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy — Province of Detroit.

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