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C'ville Board Abandons Plan

By MARIE MCGEE
Clarencville Board of Education responded to a community plea "to involve us" and unanimously rejected a redistricting plan that would have balanced the elementary

enrollment by altering school boundaries. The action came after an emotion-charged two hour public hearing Feb. 25 in the high school auditorium. By turning down the plan, the board also dissolved the

eight-member study committee of six school officials and two board members in favor of a new group that will include parents as well as school officials. Board member Norman Hunt summed up the proposal this way: "Educationally and economically, it's a good plan. Emotionally, it stinks."

THE BOARD'S rejection of the redistricting plan was not a complete surprise, however. An Observer newspaper story last Wednesday quoted Supt. David McDowell as saying: "I suspect the board will leave things as they are for another year," because of a comment on the plan. However, by the board's own timetable, a decision on the redistricting was not due until the March 11 board meeting.

What was more surprising to the parents was the speed with which the board moved to create the citizens committee.

No sooner was the vote taken when McDowell announced that forms "we just happened to have" would be available to those residents who might be interested in signing up for the committee. A check with the board office Monday revealed that only six names were turned in at the close of the Thursday meeting. Forms are still available at the board office for those who missed signing up Thursday night.

BEFORE BOWING to the demands of an adamant citizens group, the board listened for nearly two hours as residents gave their views on the redistricting proposal. Most of the 200 present were against the plan to shift 438 elementary school students. The transfers, parents were told earlier, would result in a sizable savings in ad valorem taxes and construction costs. The moves would also bring a higher financial rebate from the state because more children would be transported farther than at present.

TYPICAL of the objections raised by the parents were those voiced by Mrs. Gertrude Walsh, 1874 Floral, in the Botsford School area.

She labeled the additional busing outlined in the proposal "a disgrace at this time" when the state faces a financial crisis.

She pointed out that many of the children in the Botsford area can and do walk to school. The new plan would have 89 Botsford youngsters bused to Edgewood Elementary, approximately 1 1/2 miles away, making it necessary for the state to reimburse the school district. "If this had happened in 1963 or 1964, I would have said fine," she commented. "The enrollment then was at 800 and it was overcrowded."

She pointed out that Botsford's enrollment—like other Clarencville elementary—is steadily dropping. Current enrollment is down 150 from last year, she said. Next year's projection shows 50 less students, according to Mrs. Walsh, who is president of the school's PTA.

"There is no reason to make this move at this time," she argued.

She later reprimanded the board for failing to involve the public from the very beginning of the redistricting discussions.

"Involve us," she asked. "We might have some ideas you don't have."

COMMENTS from other parents indicated they felt the proposal's primary purpose was to help Westbrook school. They were critical of that part of the proposal that called for the busing of 150 Edgewood students a distance of three miles—passing two elementary on the way—for classes at Westbrook.

Edgewood, in Redford Township, is at the eastern border of the district. Westbrook is at the western edge in the Farmington Township portion of the district. With 185 students, Westbrook's small enrollment permits only one section per grade.

While, sympathetic, some parents felt "it's not our fault if somebody goofed" in the building of Westbrook. (Westbrook and Botsford were built at the same time, 1963. Ninety per cent of the construction funds came from the federal government under terms of a special grant that required the schools to be built immediately. The Westbrook site was then acquired, but the area never reached the expected growth potential.)

MANY of the objectors called for the temporary closing of the school until a population growth warrants opening it again. "Westbrook students could be bused cheaper to the other three elementarys," main-

tained Salvatore Tabacco, 19475 Andago, Livonia.

He suggested spreading the Westbrook enrollment among the other three elementarys. The teaching staff could be absorbed in the same manner, he said.

"Soft maintenance" of the building could be provided until the school is either reopened or another use for the building is found, he continued.

"But don't add to the mistake with this plan," he cautioned. A small group of Westbrook parents endorsed the proposal. Through their spokesman, Mrs. Catherine Vignone, 20817 Sunnydale, Farmington, Westbrook parents stated it was "an honest, workable plan to create a well-balanced elementary system that would provide better educational services to all children."

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C'ville To Cut Budget \$25,000

An additional \$25,000 to \$30,000 will have to be pared from the Clarencville School District budget this year as a result of the cuts in state aid to schools, Supt. David McDowell said.

The Clarencville district has not computed the exact amount which will be deducted from its budget based on Gov. Milliken's formula.

The Senate and House Appropriations Committees met with Milliken last week and finalized a plan to deduct three-quarters of one per cent from the district's state aid and local revenue.

MANY LEGISLATORS thought that by basing their deductions on the district's combined state aid and local revenue, the districts which receive a larger proportion of their budget from state aid would not suffer as much as from the original Milliken proposal.

Originally the governor proposed deducting a flat 2 percent from each district's state aid.

Clarencville will not be affected by the 2 percent deduction of funds from the grandfathers clause.

"If you take all the things the state government has done to us this year, we expect to be in the red about \$100,000," McDowell said.

He added that there was a reserve fund left in the \$3,416,865 budget, but it is not large enough to cover the cuts in state aid, the trailer tax cut, and the State Supreme Court decision requiring free textbooks.

BECAUSE OF its involvement in the reorganization of the school district, board members have not decided where to make adjustments in the budget to account for the additional \$25,000.

McDowell suggested that the governor should have let the state budget go in the red this year and make up the deficit with an increased income tax next year.

Gymnast Classes At C'ville

Clarencville School District will again offer a spring instructional program in gymnastics for youngsters. Registration will be on Saturday, March 6, from 9 a.m. until 12 noon in Clarencville High School's gymnasium, according to Charles Thompson, athletic director.

The program is designed to give instruction in various aspects of gymnastics to boys and girls from age six through high school.

Classes will be offered in beginning tumbling, advanced beginning tumbling, advanced tumbling, boys apparatus, girls apparatus and trampoline. Classes will be organized according to ability and age.

All classes will be held on Saturdays with each class period lasting one hour per week for nine weeks. Classes will begin March 20. Cost per week nine-week class will be \$7. Students may register for one or more classes. Registration will be conducted on a first come, first served basis.

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