

# OLS advisory committee supports administration

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Len Fedoruk

The day after a controversial Farmington Public School Board meeting March 19 where many Our Lady of Sorrows parents voiced their opinions against shared time, the OLS School Committee agreed to support their administration on this issue.

"We came to a consensus opinion that we can support this," said Len Fedoruk, chairman of the Our Lady of Sorrows School Committee, a 12-member advisory group. "There are people on this committee who support shared time and those who oppose shared time for various reasons."

The issue for school committee members was what benefits the community at large, Fedoruk said.

More than 1,000 students attend OLS.

Both Farmington Public Schools and OLS want to develop a shared time program at OLS for art, music and physical education and will look at effective implementation strategies.

"To achieve this purpose, decisions to move forward will continue to be made in collaboration with established representative consultative bodies, namely the Parish Pastoral Council, the School Committee and the Stewardship Commission," OLS Monsignor Walter Hurley wrote in an April 18 letter.

Benefits are shared resources, tax equity, and a "legal entitlement" under the law. It's a way to bolster the curriculum," Fedoruk said.

Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business, finance and operations said Farmington Public Schools will incur start up costs of \$50,000, all at OLS. "We have to provide all the materials," Cannon said.

The \$50,000 breaks down to \$30,000 for curriculum items which include equipment instruments and textbooks for music; equipment balls and jump ropes for physical education and paper cutters, during racks, a kila, easels, rolling pins and safety pins for art.

About \$20,000 is needed for administrative setup to put the 1,000 OLS students on the student accounting system. Farmington Public Schools

expects to generate annual net revenues of \$175,000-\$200,000 under the plan.

Sharing programs would save the Catholic school money, Fedoruk said. That money can be used for other things like technology, curriculum and updating texts.

Those who oppose the plan sought input from the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Representatives of the Concerned Parents of Our Lady of Sorrows who don't support shared time, contacted Bishop Kevin Britt who met with seven parents on April 9 at the parish center. They said Hurley didn't speak during the meeting. Fedoruk wasn't present.

Bishop Britt was sent in by the Cardinal to find out what exactly were the specific concerns of the group," Fedoruk said. "Issues discussed were curriculum content, loss of control, compromise of faith and general concerns and fears."

Brill's opinion was Hurley has the final authority, Fedoruk said.

Not all in favor

"We shared the poll results," said Denise Wood, who attended that meeting. "To date 239 families are not in favor. There's 41 in favor. Only 12 of the 49 in favor of shared time program signed their names."

The concerned parents question the benefits. "We want the Catholic faith," Wood said. "You can't support it if you don't see the benefits. When a doctor gives my son or daughter medicine I want to know what's in it. It's a major change in the philosophy of the school. It's not about shared time but how we choose to educate our kids. It's a hard bullet to bite. He (Hurley) is not a parent or an educator."

Some people feel so strongly about giving their children a Catholic education they struggle financially and give up vacations. "People mortgage their

homes," Wood said.

Wood was dissatisfied with what she described as a lack of response from the meeting with Britt.

Hurley declined an in-depth interview with the Farmington Observer.

As of April 18, focus groups haven't been held at OLS. That will be part of the implementation plan. "We have to make everybody comfortable in this process," Fedoruk said.

Those who strongly disagree, have alternatives — another private school or the public school, Fedoruk said.

Showing opposition by not supporting fund-raisers, athletics or withholding Sunday donations hurts the community at large, he said.

Whether or not OLS is a wealthy parish shouldn't be part of the discussion. "Wealth is not an issue," Fedoruk said.

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progress, Maxfield said. Committee meeting dates are expected to be public, he said. Meetings may alternate locations at both FPS sites and at OLS.

OLS parishioner Roy Trevisan welcomed the delay. "This is good news," Trevisan said.

Shared time programming would create an annual revenue stream for Farmington Public Schools of about \$175,000 to \$200,000.

Farmington public school teachers would bring art, music and physical education to grades 1-5 and physical education for grades 6-8.

The Farmington Public School board resolution affirms its support of shared time programming in general assuming there is strong support from the submitting community.

### A committee approach

The board resolution will authorize the Farmington Public Schools administration to appoint a committee to explore how shared time programming would work. The committee could be appointed with representatives from both sides as early as spring but wouldn't begin meeting until next fall, Maxfield said.

Both Farmington Public Schools and the Our Lady of Sorrows administrations will appoint the representatives each wishes to serve.

Maxfield hopes the delay will allow time to get all questions answered. If the committee process is successful, then the Farmington Public School Board will consider signing the shared time contract with OLS.

Maxfield admits that he doesn't know how

**The committee could be appointed with representatives from both sides as early as spring.**

strongly OLS parishioners support shared time programming. "How do you gauge that support?" he asked. "I don't know if there is a way to clearly do it. The committee would think through the issue. "He (Hurley) says there is a fairly sizable group of folks who would really like to proceed."

The request is on the table with both positive and negative viewpoints so further exploration of the issue is only fair, he said.

Maxfield hopes for a productive committee. "There's a compelling argument on both sides to give it a fair hearing."

The superintendent said, "From the standpoint of the Farmington Public Schools, we have made up our mind. We believe it is a good idea. However, we believe it must have success from both partnerships. I shouldn't expect our board to have to vote yes or no based on whether Sorrows like it. That's Sorrows' choice to vote yes or no."

Maxfield's administrative decision is to proceed. Just tabling might antagonize the situation. "It's their issue and they've got to resolve it," he said.

"What we are happy about is that it won't go into effect this fall," said Bill Noble, who is against shared time. "There will be some kind of committee. That's good. It stopped it for now. It's good we are not rushing into it."

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