

In-district schools of choice decision delayed to May 6

BY SUZIE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington School Board expects to further discuss the issue of sibling priority in its in-district schools of choice system April 16 and may make a recommendation. Officials hope to answer questions raised during Tuesday's untelevised committee meeting.

The board isn't expected to make a decision until at least the May 6 meeting. A change may occur as early as next year. The board heard comments from parents Tuesday, many of whom were concerned that sibling priority will be allowed in the district's recently approved out-of-district schools of choice plan but isn't allowed in the in-district plan.

"It would be horribly wrong if students from outside our district would be given a privilege that our in-district students don't have," said board member Gary Sharp. Parents talked about the inconsistencies of boundaries which send their children to some schools and their friends to others. Some talked about being in one home school district when they purchased their homes and in another after redistricting.

"I don't like what the lack of sibling priorities does to families," said board president Linda Enberg. It's more difficult for parents to become acquainted with the high school community in contrast with the elementary school when their children have one teacher they need to get to know, said board member Priscilla Brouillette.

Board Member Pam Christian said there's also the value of diversity. "How will this play out in our schools?" she asked. "Will they become segregated? We need to look at what's creating the perception that one school is superior to the next and work on fixing the core problem."

School Superintendent Bob Maxfield said he's been moved by all the letters and has gotten past his "obnoxious side" which said parents should have known when they enrolled their first child in the schools of choice program that a younger child might not have that opportunity through a lottery.

"School of choice should not be an inherited right," said parent Judy Holland. "It should be applied fairly and equally. Every school taxpayer should be treated equally."

Parent Mary Yu, said her twin daughters were separated because of the schools of choice plan.

Parent Marcy Berlin favors sibling priority. She thought there might be an exodus from one school.

Sharp said while his son is at North Farmington High, his wife is a Harrison High graduate.

"It's curious to me how a parent population has been able to control perception of our three high schools," Sharp said.

"It's not the kids within those three high schools which are controlling those perceptions, it's the parents. For some reason there is a negative perception among some parent populations about Harrison. It's untrue, it's unfounded and unfair."

Berlin pointed out an article about The University of Michigan's point system for admissions, which revealed North Farmington High School received more points than Harrison and Farmington High School.

"People are saying that article," Berlin said. "It's not just the parent group which is saying that. How can you bring the other schools up to that level?"

The U of M admissions policy is one the school district can't control, Sharp said. sbuck@hometeamone.net (248) 477-5450

Y honors former board members, director

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Having started out in a barn owned by a board member, the Farmington Family YMCA has a unique history of making strides in developing the organization for the better. And the people who volunteered and worked there made it possible, said Bob Denmore, former board chairman and current board member.



Terry Biddle

At the Y's annual meeting Thursday, board members past and present were honored for their efforts. Special recognition was given to past executive director Kevin Bush.

Denmore said Bush was instrumental in building the Farmington area branch to what it is today, with unique programs and child-care services becoming a model for other YMCAs statewide.

"He worked extremely hard to work with our schools," said Denmore. "He provided latch-key and sports into the school and then decided to bring day-care on site. Our branch was heralded as the largest provider of child care services in the state."

"Kevin was always trying something new to help out the kids," Denmore said, pointing out such fun-raising events as golf outings and coming up with five-year strategic plans.

"This is the best director the metro staff has ever had," Denmore said.

Bush said his 18 years with the Farmington area branch were very special to him. "I really grew up here," he said. "It's my home."

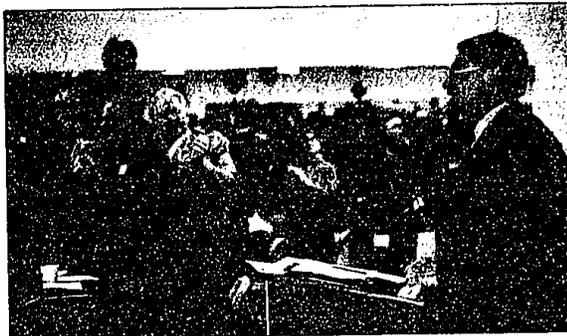
"I was not alone in building the services we have here today," he added. "It's because of the wonderful partnership and volunteers and staff here."

Bush is now a national consultant for the YMCA. "I rarely find a situation like the Farmington-Farmington Hills community," he said.

Honors were given to others at the annual breakfast. The Spiritual Leadership Award, which honors an area teenager for his or her volunteer efforts had two winners: Megan Cooper, a member of the St. Fabian Church Youth Group; and Allison Stone, a member of the youth group at Orchard United Methodist Church. The Mary Jane Freeman award went to Terrie Biddle, a school age child care worker for the Y at Longacre Elementary School.

Jon Grunt, Farmington Hills city councilman, was also recognized for his past two years as chairman of the YMCA board of directors.

Carleigh Flaherty, president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, was named the new board chairwoman.



Bill Bresler | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Former Farmington Y director Kevin Bush recalled the past.

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Road repaving to close 8 Mile/M'belt corner

A road repaving project will close the south side of the intersection at Eight Mile and Middlebelt from April 21 to May 12. Middlebelt will be closed north of Eight Mile between May 12 and May 30. "The project will restrict Eight Mile from Farmington

Road to Grand River, and will actually start on April 14," said Craig Bryson, spokesperson for the Road Commission for Oakland County. "The closures will start on April 21, and the project should be finished by Sept. 1."

Although the intersection

will be closed for four weeks, Eight Mile will remain open, with traffic shifting first to the north side, then to the south side of the road.

During the first part of the closure, when the south side of Eight Mile is being repaired, drivers are directed to detour

onto Merriman and Seven Mile to get around the intersection.

When the north side is being repaired, drivers should detour to Nine Mile and Orchard Lake, Bryson said.

By Carol Marshall

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