

Greece district to buy Mooney for \$9 million

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GREECE — Pending voter approval, the Greece Central School District will purchase the Cardinal Mooney High School building for \$9 million from the Brothers of the Holy Cross, the school's operating order.

The agreement must be approved by Greece voters through a bond referendum. The Greece school district will set a date for the vote before the end of June, according to John Yagielski, district school superintendent. The vote may come as early as August, but no later than September, 1989.

Mooney will close at the end of this month as a result of a decision announced in April by the diocese and the Holy Cross Brothers. The brothers cited declining enrollment and an operating deficit of \$700,000 as reasons for the closing.

If Greece voters approve the purchase, the Holy Cross Brothers and the diocese will divide the proceeds of the sale. Mooney spokesman Brother Lawrence Atkinson explained that when Mooney was built in the early 1960s, funding had come one-half from the Holy Cross order and one-half from a diocesan collection. Details of the division of proceeds remain to be worked out, Brother Atkinson said, noting that the order has contributed substantially to the school since its establishment, a factor which could mean that the diocese receives less than half of the sale's proceeds.

Father John Mulligan, vicar general for the diocese, said that the diocese would use its share of the proceeds for "educational purposes." To date, however, those purposes have not been determined, he said. Father Mulligan commented that all parties involved will gain from the deal, noting that the Mooney building will continue to be used for education.

According to Father Mulligan, no other "serious offers" had been made to purchase the building. "The attorneys advised us that if we didn't accept Greece's offer, it could take up to two years to sell, at a loss of \$1.8 million in interest plus expenses for security, insurance, utilities and maintenance of an unused building," he said.

Brother Atkinson said the Holy Cross Brothers decided to sell the school when the diocese informed them it didn't want the building. "The price was seen as a fair market price," he said. An insurance company and a bank had explored buying the school, but the Greece offer "was the only serious offer made," the brother said.

Brother Atkinson also remarked that leasing the school building was ruled out because the diocese had no plans to use it in the future.

One Mooney supporter expressed sadness at the sale. "I'm disappointed that there wasn't allowed enough time to put something together to save the school," said David Michael Barry, chairman of the Save Mooney Committee. Barry's committee met last month with diocesan and

school officials, including Brother Paul Rahaim, provincial of the Holy Cross Brothers and chairman of Mooney's board of trustees.

At that meeting, Brother Rahaim rejected several plans the Save Mooney Committee presented to save the school. Brother Rahaim said that none of the plans offered could put the school back on its feet financially.

Barry said that he had hoped the building could have been saved for future educational purposes. "Now that kind of facility is just gone," he said.

Thomas N. Capuano, a 1975 Mooney graduate, said that the proposed sale would not deter him from continuing to seek a lawsuit against the Holy Cross Brothers to stop the school from closing. Capuano announced two weeks ago that he was considering a lawsuit against the order on the grounds that it breach an implied contract with Mooney's school parents and students to keep the school open, and that it had bargained in bad faith with the Save Mooney Committee by not considering any alternative plans to keep the school open.

Capuano declined to name the law firm handling the case, but he did say he was optimistic that a legal precedent could be found to stop the sale of the school building. He noted, however, that he could not specify that precedent.

The building sale is a disappointment to the Mooney community, but it is a relief for the Greece school district. Yagielski

said that the Mooney purchase would save his district a substantial amount of money. Pending voter approval of a June 14 bond issue — which will be dropped from the ballot — the school district had planned to spend \$17.8 million to build a new middle school, according to Yagielski, who predicted voter approval of the Mooney purchase. "It's a good buy," he remarked.

In addition to the purchase price, the district will need to spend an estimated \$4.5 million on building modifications, including asbestos abatement, roof replacement and classroom restructuring.

The total cost of purchasing and modifying the Mooney building comes to \$13.5 million, approximately \$4 million less than the cost of building a new school of comparable size, Yagielski said. He also noted that Mooney has an auditorium and 32 acres of surrounding land that made the deal even more attractive.

The Greece school district's student population has been growing rapidly in the last few years, Yagielski said, noting that the district expects a 25 percent increase in enrollment over the next five years. The district wants to establish a middle school in the Mooney building that would open in September, 1990, and house 900 students. Eventually, the district plans to house a maximum of 1,400 students in the school, he said.

The Greece district wants to transfer middle school students from Greece-

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Revised schools scheme seen as 'more pragmatic'

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

The new shape of Monroe County's Catholic school system will be known by July at the earliest, according to William Pickett, president of St. John Fisher College and chairman of the nine-member Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools.

Pickett said that the Catholic Community Schools plan, first issued by the commission in March, has been revised significantly in response to feedback from the various groups studying the Monroe County Catholic School system. Four planning boards, representing the county's four quadrants — northeast, southeast, northwest and southwest — have been working on the reorganization of Monroe County's Catholic schools.

The revised plan is currently being reviewed by quadrant representatives, principals and pastors, Pickett said, noting that each party can submit written comments until June 19. The commission will then make any additional changes in the plan and send the final draft to Bishop Matthew H. Clark, who is expected to approve the

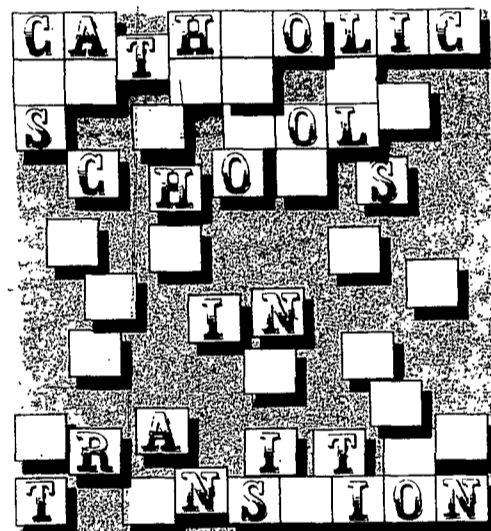
plan by early July, Pickett said.

The Northeast Quadrant Planning Board, with Bishop Clark's approval, has already adopted a reorganization plan that established a quadrant governing board, and a school financing system that directs all parishes to contribute to the support of the quadrant's schools.

The northeast plan also called for the closing of six northeast schools over the next two years and for the establishment of a diocesan-operated junior high on the premises of Bishop Kearney High School. The remaining elementary schools will house grades kindergarten through sixth.

The original draft of the community schools plan contained proposals for quadrant governance, grade reorganization and school financing that were similar to the northeast's plan. But these proposals met with opposition in the other three quadrants. In general, opponents criticized the proposals for being insensitive to the specific needs of each quadrant and for unreasonably curtailing local authority in order to centralize administration of the diocesan schools.

Representatives from the Northwest



Quadrant Planning Board, for example, criticized the grade-reorganization plan because they felt it would disrupt established programs at K-8 schools. The original plan called for each quadrant to establish a junior high program for the entire quadrant, and to reorganize its elementary schools to house grades K-6.

The revised plan still calls for the original grade configuration, but states that

any configuration is viable if it "is educationally sound and makes the optimum use of physical resources." Quadrant boards "would be free to propose a different option," the revised plan states.

Quadrant governing boards will be allowed to determine their own membership structures, as long as they contain pastors, principals, parents and parishioners. The original plan had specified that each board contain a representative from each parish, two pastors and two principals.

The revised plan also calls for each quadrant to establish its own uniform tuition rate, as opposed to the county-wide tuition rate called for in the first draft.

A controversial parish-subsidy program has also been modified. The original plan called for every Monroe County parish to contribute to the overall support of the schools within the county. The revised plan directs that parishes contribute to schools within their quadrant, and restricts the mandate for county-wide support to such programs as multi-cultural education and services to the poor.

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