

# Greece voters approve purchase of Mooney

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**GREECE** — By a margin of almost 5-1, voters here approved the school district's purchase of the Cardinal Mooney High School building.

The town's constituents turned out in substantial numbers to vote Wednesday, Aug. 9, on a \$15.4-million bond issue. The vote tally was 7,471 for to 1,583 against the bond issue, according to Duane Rupert, school-district spokesman.

Of the approved funds, \$9 million will go to purchase Mooney from the Brothers of the Holy Cross, the school's operating order. An additional \$4.7 million will be spent to renovate and repair the school, Rupert said.

The remaining \$1.7 million will be used to reopen the former West Ridge Elementary School, currently being used as a community center, as a middle school.

Mooney closed in June due to declining enrollment and financial problems. Last-ditch efforts by Mooney parents to save the school failed in early May, and the school district announced its intent to buy the school in June.

In September, 1990, the Greece district plans to reopen the Mooney building as a middle school housing 900 students. Eventually, 1,300 students will attend the new Greece middle school, Rupert estimated.

The vote came just over a week after state Supreme Court Judge Arthur Curran dismissed a lawsuit against the Holy Cross Brothers, the Diocese of Rochester, Mooney and the Greece school district. The suit had been filed by a group of Mooney school parents, who charged that Mooney's closing had been partially caused by the Greece district's desire to alleviate overcrowding in its schools.

The suit also stated that Mooney did not give adequate notice of its closing to parents, and that the school broke a "contract" that guaranteed lowerclassmen the chance to complete their high-school education at the school. Judge Curran dismissed the suit on August 1 because "of failure to state cause of action," according to James Dimassimo, the lawyer who represented the Mooney parents.

The lawsuit was a waste of time, according to Robert Boothby, president of the Mooney Men's Guild. Boothby said he voted for bond issue, but added, "I'm still bitter that the diocese didn't do something, but nothing can change that now."

Boothby said he opposed the lawsuit attempt as well as an anti-bond phone campaign led by Thomas N. Capuano, a 1975 Mooney graduate who had spearheaded the failed lawsuit. As the Greece vote approached, Capuano and several other school parents called voters encouraging them to vote "no" on the bond issue.

"Most of the people who were raising a



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

More than 9,000 voters in the town of Greece turned out Wednesday, Aug. 9, to vote on a \$15.4-million bond issue.

big fuss about this we hadn't heard about before this happened," Boothby remarked. "There were times in the past when we needed help ... and we never heard from these people."

Capuano commented that he and his wife had been financial supporters of Mooney for the last several years. He also said that he and the parents who pursued the lawsuit would have helped the school in the past, but that school officials had never hinted at the school's possible closing. "I would try anything it takes to keep that school open," Capuano said.

David Michael Barry, who chaired the "Save Mooney Committee" this spring, also said the lawsuit and phone campaign were futile. Barry said his committee's meeting this May with school and diocesan officials was the best chance the school had of staying open, and that the school's fate had been sealed as soon as school officials

rebuffed the committee's plans.

While Capuano and other Mooney supporters were calling district residents and urging them to vote against the Mooney purchase, the Greece district was waging a vigorous campaign of its own to drum up support for the bond issue. Rupert noted that the district spent \$6,000 on flyer mailings and that 100 campaign volunteers worked for the district in the weeks before the vote.

If the bond issue had been rejected, Rupert noted, the district eventually would have been forced to run double sessions in its middle schools. Barry said fear of double sessions probably prompted many parents to vote for the bond.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming margin of approval came as a surprise to Rupert. "It was certainly the largest margin of yes votes on any issue in years that I can remember," he said.



Jessica Brado, 4, helped her mom, Karen, during the voting process in Greece, where residents approved a bond issue to purchase the Cardinal Mooney High School building.

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