

Southwest

Continued from page 3

Most Precious Blood's representative asked that the commission postpone the proposed closing of his parish's school until June, 1991.

"Because the commission has not yet given a definite place for a junior high

school, we hesitate to accept the plan as proposed," said John DeVecchio, president of Most Precious Blood's parish council. DeVecchio said school parents needed more time to explore other educational options. Anne Smith, president of St. Monica's School Board, criticized the plan's call for St. Monica's to send its seventh- and eighth-grade students to a regional junior high beginning in 1992. St.

would be phased in gradually.

One item that may become an issue is the proposed opening of junior-high programs in the quadrant next fall. The Southeast Quadrant Principals' Association opposes the proposed time line for the junior highs' opening, according to Thomas Meagher, principal of Seton Catholic Intermediate and Junior High.

"We have said repeatedly ... that a March 1 decision date was unacceptable for adequate planning," Meagher said. "For example, although the New York state guidelines call for textbook requests by June 1, 1990, the reality of the situation is that some textbooks ordered on June 1, 1990, would not arrive until February, 1991, if past history is a guide."

Pickett said the commission may change the opening date of the regional junior highs. The commission had operated under the assumption that decisions affecting a junior high program needed to be made by the March preceding a program's fall opening. The commission has since learned that December is the ideal deadline for such decisions, he said.

Pickett noted that the commission will meet again on Friday, Feb. 2, to discuss the southeast plan further, though he declined to comment on definite changes in the plan until after that meeting.

Monica's serves a largely black, inner-city student body, which, Smith argued, needs a K-8 school specifically tailored to meet its needs. She cited studies claiming that black youths, especially boys, fare poorly in junior high programs that operate separately from K-6 schools.

"We're being asked to invest in a system which indirectly programs our children to fail," she said.

Parishioners at St. Theodore and St. Pius the Tenth churches both offered extensive criticisms of the plan.

The St. Theodore's document asked the commission to clarify several issues involved in school reorganization — including whether or not Southwest Quadrant parishioners would be able under the plan to send their children to schools in other quadrants, and how such situations would affect the financing of the quadrant system.

St. Pius the Tenth issued an 11-page document criticizing the plan which noted, among other points, that the draft was unpopular in the parish and argued that "the existing (c)onfiguration, (g)overnance and

(f)inancing of the St. Pius (the) Tenth Parish School is sound and is more than adequately meeting the community's requirements."

Representatives from Holy Family, St. Helen's, Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Augustine's, St. Mary of the Assumption and a handful of other parishes expressed approval of the commission's draft, although some voiced concern about the fate of St. Monica's and about the plan's time line.

St. Francis of Assisi's representative, Dolores Mary O'Brien, expressed concern about a potential tuition rate hike. Of her parish's school parents, she said: "They struggle just to maintain a home, pay high rents ... (and) sacrifice to send their children to Catholic school where tuition is already too high ..."

The mixed response to the southwest plan could result in some changes, Pickett said. The commission met on Friday, Jan. 26, to discuss the quadrant's response, and Pickett said the panel would meet again Feb. 2 to continue discussions.

Commission

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Other parishes also expressed discontent with the proposed plan. Corpus Christi's representative, Margie Usher, complained about her school's proposed closing, noting that Corpus serves a largely black student body.

"We need help," she said. "We don't need a slap in the face."

St. Joseph's Church in Penfield added to the commission's paperwork by giving members a booklet replete with objections to the plan and a petition — signed by 1,502 parishioners — asking that the draft be tabled.

Philip Burke, St. Joseph's representative, challenged the commission's planned financing of the quadrant system. Burke claimed that the quadrant would suffer a revenue shortfall of \$673,000 if the quadrant's financing plan is implemented.

Pickett noted that the commission has not yet discussed St. Joseph's financial criticisms, but he did say, "I don't believe that what they found was accurate." The commission chairman added that he did not expect the matter to become an "issue," and said the tuition increase in the quadrant

draw attention to and reinforce their position," the priest said.

One local Catholic woman, a member of Catholics for a Free Choice, said she also welcomed the dialogue.

"If this dialogue bears fruit in eliminating psychological and physical harassment of patients entering (doctors') offices, this will be a first in the nation," said Rachel Studer.

According to the group, the diocesan effort toward dialogue "could lead to the setting of ground rules which protect the rights of free speech for protesters, yet prevent abuses of medical patients.

Talks

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his sentence by organizing a blood drive for the American Red Cross over the next three months.

The diocese, meanwhile, will be organizing further dialogue with pro-choice activists.

"We hope to find ways in which women can be guaranteed access to medical care. Yet we do not feel that any person or groups of people should ever be prevented from engaging in peaceful tactics that will

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