

School plan

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The proposals last month. Both quadrants sent parish representatives who hotly contested the commission's recommendations. However, opinion was much more divided among the southwest quadrant representatives than among the southeast representatives. The latter were nearly unanimous in denouncing the time line of the proposal.

The commission will soon send the bishop recommendations on governance and finances in each quadrant, Pickett said, although he declined to give details on these aspects. Configuration recommendations will wait until spring, he said.

That's good news to Christopher Meagher, principal of Seton Intermediate and Catholic Junior High, who spoke on behalf of the Southeast Quadrant's Principals' Association at a Jan. 24 hearing on the schools plan.

At the meeting, Meagher remarked that establishing a quality junior high in the quadrant by fall of this year would be nearly impossible, given the limited amount of time available to do so.

Meagher praised the decision to delay the configuration recommendations another year. "I think it was a good idea, so we can adequately plan for the changes," he said. "If we have an idea of what the plan will be in March, we will have enough time to implement the changes."

Sister Katherine Ann Rappl, RSM, principal of St. Rita's, was grateful for the delay, but said she was concerned that her school might suffer an enrollment drop because parents are now unsure if it will stay open beyond June, 1991.

"Some are wondering if we're going to go through one more year, and others are very grateful for a Catholic education," she said, describing the mixed response of school parents to the commission's announcement.

Sister Rappl added that she hoped the commission would take into account her school's stable enrollment and potential for an increase in primary-grade students from Webster, which she described as a growing area. She remarked that the school is currently engaged in a marketing campaign to increase enrollment.

Pickett said the commission will meet again on Feb. 22.

Parents

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Last week, following heated opposition from parish representatives at public hearings in January, Pickett's commission said it would delay recommendations for grade reconfigurations and school closings in the southeast and southwest quadrants until spring of this year.

Wagner remarked that his group was still opposed to plans for the southwest and southeast quadrants, despite the announcement by Pickett's commission that the implementation of grade configuration proposals would be delayed in both quadrants.

"I guess we're still concerned as to the rest of the plan," Wagner said, citing ACE's opposition to quadrant governing boards and quadrant-wide uniform tuition rates.

The commission's plan to reorganize the northeast quadrant is already in effect, having been approved by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Three schools closed in the northeast last year, and two more will close

this June.

The commission has released no proposal for the northwest quadrant as of yet, though no school closings are expected.

ACE's ultimate goal is to meet with the commission and Bishop Clark, Wagner said. "I think in the offing ... we're going to try and form some clear questions for the commission and the bishop," he said, adding that he believed there was a "widespread perception" that the diocese is not listening to parental input on the schools' issue.

Pickett said he was out of town when the Sunday protest took place, but questioned why the protesters chose Fisher to stage their action.

"I don't quite understand why they're demonstrating on campus," he said. "They didn't ask for permission." He added that while he had no problem with people criticizing the idea of a quadrant-based school system, the decision to organize the system along those lines was made by the diocese, not by the commission.

"The decision was made prior to the formation of the commission ...," Pickett commented, adding that "(the protesters) were probably off by about 10 miles."

When asked where the protesters should have staged their action, he answered, "Buffalo Road, or (Sacred Heart) Cathedral." The diocesan pastoral center is located at 1150 Buffalo Road, and Bishop Matthew H. Clark resides at the cathedral.

Father George Norton, diocesan spokesman, said the quadrant system will improve Catholic schools financially while preserving a governing role for parents.

Closing

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present, it was a mission of St. Bridget's. Between 1878 and 1912 it was a mission of St. Rose of Lima.

Over the years, as the parish's population has declined, more and more of its ministries have been moved to St.

Bridget's. Only Saturday evening Masses are still conducted at St. Joseph's.

The St. Joseph's/St. Bridget's Parish Council is now in the process of examining when Masses will officially end at St. Joseph's. Also being considered are options for the building.

Among possibilities being discussed is selling the church to a group of people in West Bloomfield who would like to restore

the building for use as a day care facility during the the day and as a community center for evening activities. This plan is contingent on whether the group receives state grants to renovate the building.

Powers noted that people in the parish have some strong feelings of sadness and nostalgia about the parish. But, he concluded, "when you look at the reality, you've got to face the music."

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