



BRIDGING THE GAP-- Beams for the Deckerville Road bridge over Mud Creek, east of Cemetery Road, were installed Friday. The bridge may be open in about a month. Eisenhour Construction Co. of East Lansing is the contractor, with the approximately \$75,000 project being paid for with 80 percent federal funds, 10 percent state and 10 percent from the Tuscola County Road Commission.

Half-mill reduction

Millage, enrollment both decline in Owen-Gage

Property owners in the Owendale-Gagetown School District will be getting a slight break on their tax bills come December.

On the recommendation of Supt. Ronald Erickson, the school board Monday evening approved a total tax levy for 1980-81 of 25.4 mills, half-mill less than what was levied last year.

The reduction came in the 1967 bond debt levy, reduced from 1 mill to .5 mill. The reduction was possible, he said, because of an increase in property assessments and a big enough current balance in the fund. There could be an increase next year, he cautioned.

The 1976 debt levy of 3.4 mills and the 21.5 mills for operations remain the same as last year.

The 1967 levy was computed on the basis of a state-qualified valuation of the district of about \$46 million, but the 1976 levy was based on an SEV of \$36 million because of the deletion of the Goshin and Elenbaum territories.

Owen-Gage contends those two properties are still part of the district, but for purposes of computing debt levies, he deleted them. Erickson commented during the meeting, "because we never know what the courts will do."

Afterwards, he explained, "That's a bill you have to pay, so I have to be careful on that." The necessity to pay the amount due didn't allow him to take the chance that the needed revenue wouldn't be there, should Owen-Gage ultimately lose its court cases on the property transfer issue.

The 1967 levy is based on the higher SEV because that was before the Goshin and Elenbaum transfers were made so there is no question

about property owners there paying the half mill.

The superintendent said after the meeting that the district finished in the black financially in 1979-80, if operating revenue from the Goslin parcel is included. The audit for the fiscal year which ended June 30 will be presented at the October board meeting. The board will also approve the 1980-81 budget then.

ENROLLMENT

Elementary Principal Bill Britt reported enrollment in grades K-6 is 215, the same as the fourth Friday count last year, although enrollment ultimately reached 222.

At the high school, Principal James Barr said, enrollment was down 30-40 students. The count totaled 215, which would be 31 less than last year's official count.

The big losses, he said, came in the seventh and 12th grades.

Owen-Gage doesn't qualify for per student state aid, so the enrollment drop won't affect it in that regard.

OTHER ITEMS

Higher lunch prices were approved of 50 cents for grades K-6; 75 cents for 7-12, and \$1 for adults, a reported increase of 5, 10 and 25 cents respectively.

Erickson said the lunch program is still in the black because of a surplus in the elementary program, but was starting to run in the red.

With the Band Boosters agreeing to pay half the debt for the high school yearbook, the school board agreed to pay the other half. Total debt is \$1,892.31, which had accumulated over five years.

There was discussion

about the theft of four music instruments from the band room, discovered during the Owendale 75th Anniversary Celebration over the July 4th week end.

Barr said three were later found in the downtown area, so only one was permanently missing. Another instrument was taken Monday, but was found in the bleachers.

Erickson said the tumbler being changed in the instrument room lock, with one key to be kept by band director Laura Witczak and the other by Barr. At the request of the Band Boosters, who conduct weekly bingo games in the Gagetown gym, mercury vapor bulbs will be installed there,

if possible, to improve lighting.

The 1980-81 athletic budget was approved, with \$12,500 budgeted for expenditures, plus \$1,000 for contingencies, the same as last year.

Barr reported that due to fewer students and not enough participants for football, there won't be a junior varsity team this year. Forty-five players were anticipated but only 31 showed up. The coaches found that some JV players were needed for the varsity games, so there weren't enough players left to form a JV team.

Alice Smith of Sandusky was hired as the elementary

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Intermediate strike begins second week

The strike by Tuscola Intermediate School District teachers and other professional staff began its second week Wednesday, with an apparent guarantee it will be at least one more week before it ends.

The next negotiating session isn't scheduled until 10 a.m. Tuesday of next week.

The 103 members of the Tuscola Intermediate Education Association (TIEA) have been on strike since Sept. 3, the scheduled start of the school year, to protest lack of a new contract with the intermediate district Board of Education.

Directly affected from all over the county are 340 special education students and about 725 students scheduled to be attending the new Tuscola Area Skill Center.

The last negotiating session was Sept. 2, the day before classes were to start. At the more than eight hour session, agreement was reached on all issues except salaries and insurance.

LATE LAST WEEK, ACCORDING TO TIEA President Robyn Romatz, the union requested the services of a state mediator "because there has been no movement on the side of the board."

The mediator, Gordon Lee, was willing to meet with the two sides Saturday, she said, but the board's professional negotiator, Al Luce, was unwilling to work on the week end.

Intermediate District Assistant Superintendent Jerome Thienes responded that Luce had said his comment to Phyllis McCoy Friday about not working

week ends was meant as a joke, as he had met with the teacher bargaining team on Sunday of Labor Day week end.

Ms. McCoy is the chief negotiator for the Tri-County Bargaining Association (TCBA), which is representing the TIEA in the negotiations.

ACCORDING TO Thienes, Luce asked her if the TCBA had changed its position and she said "no." Since the intermediate board also hadn't changed its position, he couldn't see the sense in meeting Saturday.

The next day after Saturday that Lee and Luce were available was Tuesday, Sept. 16.

At the intermediate school board meeting Monday, Miss Romatz said, the teachers offered to negotiate any time this week, with or without the mediator.

Thienes told the Chronicle Wednesday morning that the board would consider meeting this week if the request came in writing from the TCBA, that it could be charged with an unfair labor practice if it deals with anyone other than that organization. "We don't feel we should be talking to the TIEA," he commented, referring to Miss Romatz, who doesn't speak directly for the bargaining association.

Asked if she thought final agreement could be reached in one more negotiating session, she replied, "We most certainly could. We're not that far apart."

"I really feel with a mediator, we might make some progress," Thienes commented, adding that

New committees approved

Mrs. Crouse, board reach like accord

It appears as if the touchy question of whether or not Mrs. Joyce Crouse, wife of superintendent Donald Crouse, should teach has been settled.

The matter was resolved Monday night at the regular meeting of the Cass City School Board. Appearing before the board was Forrest Walpole, Caro attorney representing Mrs. Crouse.

He told the board that Mrs. Crouse was prepared to drop all charges against the board if the board would apologize for her embarrassment and set a policy so future teachers could not be placed in her position.

Dean Hoag and Dick Albee, two of four board members who objected to hiring Mrs. Crouse, quickly agreed with the terms, as did the three members who supported hiring her.

Two others, Thresa Burnette and Dr. E. Paul Lockwood, wanted to see what form the apology would take before committing themselves.

Walpole said that Mrs. Crouse was taking the action to try and heal a split on the board that could affect the education of Cass City children.

Walpole will draft a letter to be signed by the board and it will be considered at the

next regular board meeting. Mrs. Crouse had been offered a contract by Principal Russell Richards and later, after much deliberation, the board voted 4-3 not to honor the contract.

After the discussion with Walpole, the board instructed Richards to interview candidates for the special education position that is now open.

There was discussion about the board not automatically approving contracts as has been the practice in the past. The procedure was followed Monday night when the contracts of Eugene Lukshaitis, intermediate counselor, and Donald Markel, high school social studies and mathematics, were approved.

In the discussion about interviewing teachers, Superintendent Crouse said that if the board did not want to accept the opinion of the principals and the superintendent that it should take over the interviews.

What it boils down to, Crouse said, is that if the board is not satisfied with the job of the administrator, it should get a new one.

APPOINT COMMITTEES

The appointment of standing committees, under

discussion for two months, was approved. The committees are personnel, curriculum and finance and property. The idea is to have certain board members specialize in one or more of the fields covered by the committee and report to the board.

One of the sticklers for the board was the evaluation of teachers by the personnel committee. Members wanted that to come to the entire board so this duty for the committee was stricken in the committee guidelines adopted.

WANTS SERVICE

A district resident that lives about a half mile west of Deford on Deckerville Road requested bus service for her two children that attend kindergarten and first grade at Deford Schools.

Normally the bus does not pick up children that close to the school but an exception may be made if investigation indicates that the children have to walk on the shoulder of the road.

OTHER BUSINESS

Low bids were accepted for the sale of three used buses. A 1971 Chevrolet was

sold to Ed Hill of Cass City for \$1,200. A 1972 Chevrolet was sold to Skipinski Garage, Uby, for \$469.94, and a 1972 Ford went to Alfred Creason of Snover for \$703.

Low bidder for bus insurance among three bidders was Farm Bureau, which offered complete coverage for \$5,811.38.

The board approved establishing a community education program at Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port. It is expected to be self-sustaining if started.

High school completion course teachers were upped 50 cents per hour to \$8.50. A 25-cent incentive pay is offered provided the students enrolled are still in class when the official count comes on the fourth Friday of September. That's when payment from the State is figured on a per capita student basis.

Guidelines for the awarding of credit for work at the skill center were adopted. For two years and one summer of work, 10 credits will be earned, the board decided.

This week there were 42 students enrolled at the skill center and they are doing nothing for half of each school day. That's because the skill center is on strike.

Trip ends in tragedy, seven die near Millington

A Clio couple and five of their grandchildren, returning from a long day's outing to Sault Ste. Marie, died inside their burning car early Sunday after crashing into a concrete bridge railing in the southwest corner of Tuscola county.

Killed were Philip D. Smith, 51, and his wife,

Frances, 48; Shelly Renee Tanner, 7, of Clio; sisters Melissa Shawn and Kristen Lynn Smith, 8 and 6 respectively, and sisters Amy Frances and Jennifer Leah Tanner, 6 and 2. The latter four were from Flint.

The seven had left early Saturday for the long one-day trip to the Soo Locks and were within about 10 miles of home when the accident occurred. From Clio to Sault Ste. Marie and return is about 540 miles.

According to the sheriff's department, the car was eastbound on Birch Run Road, a quarter-mile west of

Lewis Road at 2:10 a.m., when it went off the south side of the road, traveled 100 feet and rammed the end of the bridge railing over the ironically named Dead Creek.

The 1980 model car then rolled over into the creek and landed on its roof.

The first person on the scene, William D. Levitt of 9624 Birch Run Road, Millington, told deputies he arrived moments after the crash, but was unable to get a door open. The interior of the car and engine compartment were already engulfed in flames.

He tried to get passing

motorists to stop, to no avail, then went to a neighbor's to get a hammer and fire extinguisher, but was unsuccessful.

He returned to the scene and got Dennis Valentine and his passenger, Thomas Betz of Birch Run, who were driving by, to stop. Bernie Osborn of Sheridan Road, Millington, apparently also driving by, also helped and the four finally got a door open.

Flames shot out and there was no movement or sounds from inside the car. The flames were raging so high, it was reported, the men

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Uby voters say no to building

By an overwhelming margin Monday, 722-316, voters in the Uby School District defeated a \$1.295 million bonding proposal for construction of an addition to the high school.

Approval of the levy would have added an average of 2 mills a year to tax bills for 16 years.

The proposed 20,000 square foot addition would have provided classrooms and work areas for agriculture, band, industrial arts and science classes, bus school offices.

It would have replaced 11 portable classrooms, a

large metal building housing three classrooms and one trailer.

The board will discuss the defeat at its Oct. 13 meeting, according to Business Manager Mark Tenbusch, and whether to schedule another vote.

Monday's turnout of 1,038 voters was much higher than usual, Tenbusch said, as only about 600 usually vote in June school elections.

Election inspectors found some persons were voting in a school election for the first time in eight years.

About 2,500 persons are registered to vote in the district.



PICKETING IN THE RAIN -- Striking members of the Tuscola Intermediate Education Association were picketing Tuesday at the Intermediate School District complex on Cleaver Road, Caro, rain or no rain. The picketers survived the weather better than did some of their cardboard picket signs.