

GROSSE POINTE CIVIC NEWS

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OF GROSSE POINTE TOWNSHIP

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No. 9

CENTRAL RECREATION COMMISSION FOR GROSSE POINTE RECOMMENDED BY EXPERT AFTER SURVEY

THAT a recreation commission be established in Grosse Pointe Township with power to conduct playground and indoor recreation activities on the grounds and in the buildings in charge of the Board of Education and the various park departments or on any other public grounds under the control of the villages or on private property approved by the commission is the recommendation of Clarence E. Brewer, commissioner of recreation in Detroit, member of President Coolidge's conference on outdoor recreation and a member of the Playground and Recreation Association of America. Mr. Brewer has just completed a survey of the recreation problem in the township at the request of the Citizens' Association of Grosse Pointe Township.

Mr. Brewer points out that the need of recreation in any community is now recognized by all. "The perplexities of city life, the congestion of population, the opportunities for perversion of youthful activities into unwholesome channels," he declares, "make imperative the establishment of a recreation program whereby the leisure hours of children and adults may be properly and profitably occupied. The recreation system properly functioning should create safe places in which children may play; decrease juvenile delinquency, break down race prejudice; improve the health and physique of the people; and tend toward the development of a neighborly spirit and civic pride in the community. The effectiveness of a public recreation system cannot be measured by the number of its playgrounds but by the effectiveness of a supervised program. Consequently, the training and educational function of a playground should not be underestimated. Much of the expense of the present correc-

tional institutions, police departments and courts can, in the future, be saved by a proper recreation program today. The justification of the establishment of a recreation system is its ultimate economy in the building of a citizenship which shall be sound physically and morally."

Choice of Two Plans

A separate recreation department in each village would result only in chaotic conditions, Mr. Brewer believes, and would not be as beneficial as a recreation program for the five villages administered by a central system of control—the same as the school board is administered.

Two methods for organization of the Recreation Commission are suggested: (1) A seven-man board, consisting of one representative named by the council in each of the five villages, the superintendent of schools and a representative named by the Neighborhood Club; (2) A seven-man board consisting of five representatives named by the Board of Education, the superintendent of schools and a representative of the Neighborhood Club. Authority to create a Recreation Commission through either of these methods is given the Board of Education by State Bill No. 301.

"Some of the villages have their own parks and docks along the lake front," Mr. Brewer notes in his report, "but the privilege of using these facilities is limited to the residents of the particular village and for which admission cards are issued. Admission is refused to those not holding cards. The tendency of the villages is to go the other village one better, resulting in an expensive policy with no uniform or central plan of administration.

"I am informed that the school board has, at the present time, an area of 64.78 acres in public school

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A HOPEFUL SIGN

At a special meeting, the Board of Education on February 14th voted to retain George D. Strayer and N. L. Engelhardt, professors of education of Teachers' College, Columbia University, nationally known experts, at an estimated expense of \$3,000 to make a survey of the Grosse Pointe district and recommend a junior high school building and site program.

This step was taken at the earnest recommendation of Trustee Fred Sutter, chairman of a committee appointed to recommend a group of three experts to make a further study of the district on the junior high school site matter. This matter has been juggled from pillar to post by the Board for more than a year, due primarily to the fact that the Board feared to place the western junior high school in Grosse Pointe Park as recommended by its superintendent and by Dr. Charles L. Spain, deputy superintendent of the Detroit Board of Education.

Trustee Julius L. Berns, who at a previous meeting opposed the plan to hire outside experts, was not present at the February 14th meeting. Trustee Sutter obviated the possibility of the Board's again changing its mind, by immediately securing a vote against reconsideration of the motion.

Poupard Regrets Delay

President P. Hudson Bradley expressed himself in hearty accord with the plan to hire new experts at an expense of \$3,000, as did Trustee Charles A. Parcels. Trustee Charles A. Poupard objected to further delay in designating a junior high school site, declaring he was sorry that he had not made a motion on January 28th to designate the St. Paul-Audubon site recommended by both Dr. Spain and Dr. S. M. Brownell, the Board's superintendent. He declared he did not believe that much was to be gained by hiring new experts, other than more expense and more delay, that

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P. O. Address, 51 Warren Ave., W., Detroit

H. P. Breitenbach, Consulting Editor
B. E. Meyers, Editor

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CO-OPERATION PLEDGED

The Board of Education has engaged two experts, Professors Strayer and Engelhardt, of Teachers' College, Columbia University, to recommend a building and site program of junior high schools. The Citizens' Association is heartily in favor of employing experts in cases, such as the present, where technical knowledge and disinterested judgment are requisites.

To Professors Strayer and Engelhardt we offer whatever information we possess on the subject and our full and cordial co-operation.

MARCH ELECTIONS

March 4th

Township Primary

March 11th

Grosse Pointe Farms Election.
Grosse Pointe Village Election.
Lochmoor Election.
Grosse Pointe Park Election.

Little interest attaches to this year's township election, it being what is termed an "off-year" for opposition to incumbents. None is opposed for re-election, except Justice-of-the-Peace John LaBelle of Grosse Pointe Farms, who has four opponents: former justices, Frank A. Diegel, plumber, and Noah Paye, painter and decorator; Frank M. Allard, former constable and policeman, and John W. Babcock, 32 years old, an attorney, residing at 937 Nottingham Road, Grosse Pointe Park. The latter is a graduate of the University of Detroit with experience as a high school teacher and bank clerk, plus eight years' practice as a lawyer.

"My reason for seeking the office," writes justice-candidate Babcock, "is a belief that the rapidly-increasing population in the town-

ship is entitled to have attorneys occupy judicial offices where citizens may have difficulties adjudicated by one schooled in the principles of law without being required to go down into Detroit to accomplish such desire."

Grosse Pointe Farms

In Grosse Pointe Farms, Kenneth L. Moore, prominent realtor, is opposing Daniel G. Allor, long-time dual office-holder in township and village, for the presidency. B. B. Mason and Joseph Snay, trustees, and Arthur Gardner and Joseph Marsack are seeking election to three trusteeships. (The latter, a janitor at Grosse Pointe High School, who previously has been a lather, shingler and marine fireman, gives no reasons for running, but asks the question: "Is education a true index of character?") For treasurer, Harry A. Furton, 26, high school education and nine years in banking work, is opposing Walter A. Allard, 32, an accountant, who was assistant village clerk for six years and who last year was a candidate for clerk "to correct inefficiency and laxity in the upkeep of the records." Clerk John R. Kerby is unopposed for re-election, also Assessor Alonzo Bachman. Voters will also cast ballots for or against a \$612,000 bond issue for sewer construction to close Black Marsh Ditch, for a permanent sewage pumping station and for sewers parallel to the ditch.

Grosse Pointe Village

In Grosse Pointe Village, President Richard P. Connor and Clerk Norbert P. Neff are unopposed for re-election. Herbert Trix and Dan M. Cronin are seeking re-election to the council. For the third council seat to be filled there are three candidates: Clarence E. Carlon, 34, an attorney, residing at 737 Rivard Boulevard, who writes that he is interested in village affairs as a property and home owner anxious to assist and co-operate in every way in bringing about such improvements as are necessary for the best interests of the village as a whole; Leo O. Teetaert, 22, face brick salesman, non-property owner, living at 851 St. Clair Avenue, who is "interested in progress of the village in which I was born and raised;" and William S. Diedrich, 40 years old, 400 Lincoln Road, former Jefferson Avenue store-keeper and can-

didate last year for justice of the peace. For treasurer, there are three candidates: Stephen H. Van Tien, former township treasurer; Julius A. Stork, retiring village councilman; and Charles A. Poupard, trustee and treasurer of the Board of Education. Theodore F. Damerow, incumbent, and Neil Blondell, retiring treasurer, are candidates for assessor.

Grosse Pointe Village voters will also ballot on four separate bond issues: \$360,000 thirty-year bonds at not to exceed 5 per cent. interest to finance proposed sewer construction to effect closing of Black Marsh Ditch; \$9,000 fifteen-year bonds to complete the village's tree-planting program on all streets not yet planted. (It is estimated that 1,500 trees will be needed. Six hundred trees have been planted on University, Neff, St. Clair, Notre Dame and Maumee in the last three years); \$2,600 fifteen-year bonds to finance a 10-foot widening of the pavement on the west side of Notre Dame between Kercheval Place and Van Avenue; and \$4,400 fifteen-year bonds to finance an 8-foot widening of the pavement on each side of Kercheval Avenue between St. Clair and Neff.

Lochmoor

In Lochmoor, Joseph E. Beaufait, candidate for re-election to the presidency, is being opposed by James W. Carter, a retiring member of the present village commission and a township justice. James Van Antwerp and William J. Michaux, commissioners, are seeking re-election. Other candidates for the three commissionerships to be filled are John W. Holme and Glenn W. Horwood. Clerk Philip F. Allard is being opposed for re-election by Norbert F. Denk, clerk in the township supervisor's office. James E. Goodrich, incumbent, is being opposed for treasurer by Mrs. Marjorie Berhiser and Alphonse La Duk. Bert Allen, assessor, is opposed for re-election by Fred Duroff.

No candidates have filed to oppose incumbents seeking re-election in Grosse Pointe Park.

Prof. Stanley T. Williams of Yale University, the fifth prominent public speaker of this winter's lecture course in Grosse Pointe High School, will deliver an address on Friday, March 29th, at 8:30 p. m.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD?

Article No. 2

(In the last issue of Civic News appeared the first article in this series. It asked the question: Why cannot the intelligent group of public servants on the Board of Education conduct its affairs in a business-like manner, in a reasonable length of time and without undue burden to its own peace of mind and that of the taxpayers? The answer given was that the Board is hampering itself by clinging to antiquated business methods inherited from previous boards; is permitting local politics to color its decisions; and is disregarding expert counsel to follow personal opinion unsupported by facts. This and subsequent articles will survey specific cases and suggest remedies in a constructive program.)

THE fundamentals of good administration in the order of their natural application are: (1) Organization; (2) Deputization; (3) Supervision. The committee system of organization adopted each year by the Board of Education since its establishment tends to saddle detail work on officials who serve without pay. It is the root of much of the Board's difficulties. It leads to innumerable special meetings, in addition to the two regular monthly meetings, devoting much valuable time and no little effort to matters that should be delegated to paid responsible employes. According to the secretary's report for the last fiscal year, the trustees had attended 50 meetings and spend approximately 30 six-hour days on Board business. Thus the trustees give of their time generously and with the best of intentions; but their aims are frustrated by their inefficient method of operation.

The committee system used in Grosse Pointe was long ago abolished by Detroit and other progressive boards in favor of professional advice and research by paid employes to whom responsibility is properly delegated.

Votes Traded for Jobs

How does the committee system work out? For instance, the janitors' committee has to poke around furnaces, listen to long explanations. All of this is work that would be handled better through a paid employe of the Board.

The teachers' committee, only recently abolished, had perhaps the most harmful potentialities of any limb of the old committee organization. Two years ago, the teachers' committee in response to an insistent public demand for better

teachers (whom the former superintendent of schools seemed unable to find or develop), began a praiseworthy movement to obtain the best teaching talent available. It decided to drop various teachers whose work it believed did not warrant retention and also received the resignation of the superintendent. Following this, Grosse Pointe was treated to the amazing sight of a school board election in which discharged teachers campaigned for candidates pledged to reinstate them.

The new superintendent of schools called attention to the proper practice for improving the teaching by delegation of the responsibility of hiring, discharging and promoting teachers to the superintendent, with the Board's approval. This practice is now established. But some trustees still insist at times on making their honorable positions more difficult then necessary by listening to the pleading of candidates for jobs instead of politely referring all candidates to the proper channel for seeking employment. One trustee on one occasion bluntly informed the Board that he would oppose every future recommendation by the superintendent until a certain individual had been given a position. His colleagues, however, refused to be bluffed and voted to concur in the superintendent's recommendations over his opposition.

The situation referred to arose at the meeting of the Board on September 10, 1928. Trustee Julius L. Berns moved the rejection of the appointments recommended by the superintendent, but his motion was not seconded. There followed a long, dreary debate with Trustee Berns' remaining adamant in his attitude. Finally, the appointments were taken up one by one. Trustee Berns voted for a Grosse Pointe resident who happened to be on the list and one other, voted "no" on a third and refused to vote on a fourth.

Piano Junket

Another instance of ill-advised interference of trustees in business details was a recent committee-of-the-whole junket heartily concurred in by Trustee Charles A. Parcels. The

trustees met downtown in the middle of a busy day when their own private affairs were clamoring for attention, trekked from store to store and personally inspected the size, shape, price and tone of a number of pianos, although all details had been checked and reported to them previously by their paid employes, the superintendent and the music teachers, and appropriate recommendations had been given the Board. The matter could have been disposed of in the twinkling of an eye at regular board meeting.

Subsequent articles will review other points criticized. The proposed remedies to be dwelt upon in more detail later are briefly: (1) Business-like conduct of Board affairs in short sessions devoted to fundamental policies, deputization and supervisory action; (2) School Board candidates who have no entangling alliances and who will shed their local attitudes when they get on the Board and represent the whole district; (3) Reliance on disinterested expert judgment rather than biased, personal opinion unsupported by facts.

NEW ARCHITECT ENGAGED

The architectural firm of Robert O. Derrick, Inc., was engaged by the Board of Education at a special meeting in January to design and supervise construction of the first unit of an elementary school on the so-called McMillan site, a 3.55-acre parcel north of the high school athletic field and located between McKinley, McMillan, Ridge and Kercheval in Grosse Pointe Farms. The site has just been acquired through direct negotiation for \$123,937.89. The voters last June approved a \$360,000 bond issue for the project.

The Board on February 18th approved Supt. Brownell's recommendations of a layout of 10 classrooms, 6 special rooms, 5 special units, a playroom, gymnasium and auditorium to give a working capacity for 685 pupils in the new school's first unit, to be ready next January.

The district to be served by the new school—Elementary District No. 4—is bounded on the southwest by Lakeland Avenue, on the southeast by Lake St. Clair, on the north by Moran Road and on the northwest by Mack Avenue. Space is expected to be needed eventually for 1,269 pupils in grades one to six.

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sites. The ultimate area proposed for public school sites totals 88.28 acres. In addition to this, there are approximately 30 acres of public and private areas which could be used for public recreation purposes. The school board issues permits to various organizations to use school grounds and school buildings for recreation purposes. This last summer the school board operated summer playgrounds under supervision of employes of the board. Complaints were received by the Board of Education from adjacent property owners relative to the way in which the grounds were being used, resulting in damage to their property. These objections could be removed by strict supervision and a better choice of activities permitted on various school grounds."

Urges Care in Selection

Regarding the acquisition of property for recreation purposes, Mr. Brewer's recommendation is as follows:

"That no property in the future be acquired unless it has been approved by a representative and unbiased group of people or organization whose duty shall be to make the proper survey and secure the services of competent people to ascertain the needs and location in accordance with the greatest good for the greatest number."

If the Board of Education desires the counsel of competent recreational authority to guide it in organizing the Recreation Commission, outlining its powers, duties, fi-

nances and the like, Mr. Brewer recommends the retention of W. G. Robinson, field representative in Michigan and Ohio of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, whose duty it is to place his services at the disposal of local authorities without charge, whenever called upon.

Copies of Mr. Brewer's report have been forwarded by the Citizens' Association to the Board of Education and the various village councils for their consideration. If action upon it is taken this spring, the Recreation Commission proposed could be established at once and funds for its use provided in the budget for the next fiscal year, beginning July 1st.

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was not likely to change the final result.

"The program we have ahead of us," said Mr. Sutter, "contemplates expenditure of about three-quarters of a million dollars in sites and about two million dollars for buildings. I think that \$3,000 is a small sum to pay to be sure that we are right in our plans and, what is more important now, to be sure that the action we take will be unbiased by personal opinions of the trustees. The survey can be made by May 1st at the latest."

Mr. Poupard voted with his colleagues on the motion and also on the reconsideration motion.

Sutter for Secrecy

(Prior to the opening of the meeting, Trustee Sutter endeavored to

make it a secret session and exclude Civic News' representative from hearing the deliberations. He made a motion to go into executive session, but it was not brought to a vote. Finally, Mr. Sutter dropped his executive session plan, saying that he would let this be a test case, intimating that if the meeting were not written up to suit him, he would not tolerate the presence of Civic News' representative at future meetings.)

Civic News sees a hopeful sign in the action taken by the Board at Mr. Sutter's recommendation because of the commendable about-face which Mr. Sutter and Mr. Bradley have made on the subject of expert opinion. Both have not hesitated at various times in this matter and in other public business to express their distrust of the views of all experts. Now, they have committed themselves to abide by the findings of Messrs. Strayer and Engelhardt and to subordinate their own personal opinions.

ROAD MEETING DELAYED

Meeting of the Grosse Pointe Farms' council with the Wayne Board of County Road Commissioners to discuss the latter's proposal to build at county expense a \$600,000 to \$700,000 120-foot highway to replace the present 18-foot Lake Shore Road "bottle-neck" has been delayed but is expected to be held soon, according to Clerk John R. Kerby who was directed by the council on February 4th to arrange the meeting.

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OF GROSSE POINTE TOWNSHIP

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