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LOCAL NEWS

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Student selection at school delayed

Judge to rule March 31 whether siblings get preference

By Ann DeMatteo
Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — The lottery selection for the Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School in Hamden was put off until March 31 to give a Superior Court judge time to decide whether preference should be given to Hamden applicants who have siblings at the school.

Judge Patti Jenkins Pittman on Tuesday said she would hear legal issues connected with the case March 1 and hold an evidentiary hearing March 22, if

necessary.

Attorneys representing the Board of Education and a group of parents who want sibling preference reinstated appeared before Pittman Tuesday morning because an injunction hearing to block the lottery was scheduled. However, a lawyer for the school board asked for a dismissal, causing Pittman to continue the matter until March 1.

"We don't believe the plaintiffs have legal standing to seek an injunction and challenge the board's decision to remove sibling preference," said Frank G. Usseglio, a lawyer for the school board. "We think the claim has very little merit."

Usseglio said it would be extremely costly if parents had the right to challenge every decision a school board made.

"Our position is we clearly

have standing," said Anthony S. Bonadies, the parents' lawyer. "The parents were directly affected by this decision. We're confident we have the legal basis to move forward."

For the case to be continued, school officials had to agree to hold off on the lottery selection until at least March 31, Bonadie said.

Bonadies represents 10 parents of Wintergreen students

who oppose the Board of Education's Dec. 3, 1998, decision to eliminate sibling preference as a criteria for enrollment. Since one of the reasons the school was opened was to allay overcrowding, the school board cited the need for the school to be open to as many Hamden children as possible.

There are 249 Hamden students through Grade 4 now attending the school, and school

officials expect almost all of them to return. Grades 5 to 8 will be added in the fall, and there will be 152 openings for Hamden youngsters in those grades.

The parents who want sibling preference reinstated, or at least grandfathered for children already in the school, contend that they relied on it in deciding whether to send their children to Wintergreen.

New Haven, Woodbridge and Wallingford also are part of the magnet school. The enrollment will double to 600 next year.

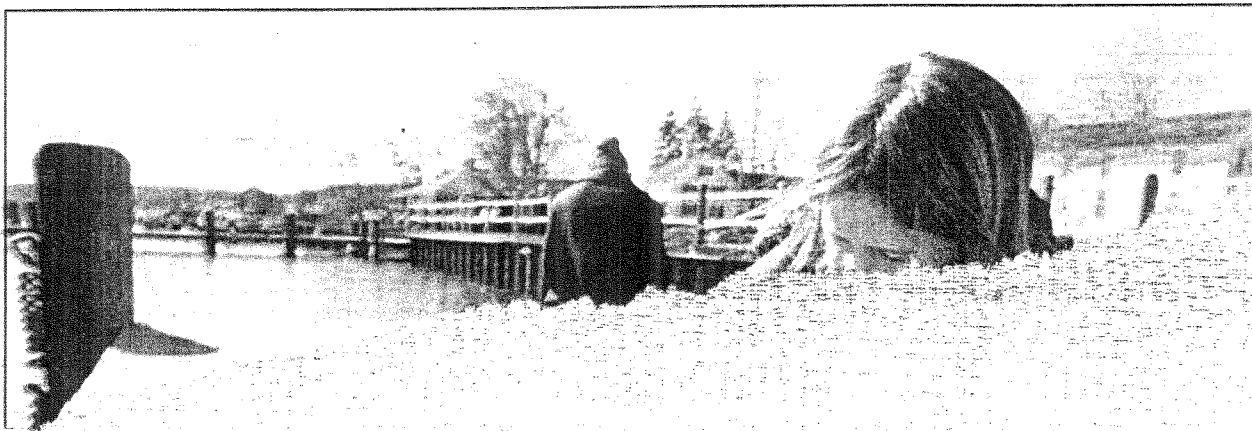
Schools look for funding boost

Panel concerned budget falls short

By Ann DeMatteo
Register Staff

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WATER COLORS



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