

Schools Trust Document Presented

The tax-exempt trust would raise money for school projects

by Ann Levison

An ad hoc task force charged with setting up a nonprofit trust that could accept donations from residents and others for use in school programs presented a draft set of bylaws and a statement of purpose to the School Committee on Monday night. The Harvard Schools Trust would be "an independent nonprofit organization" that would "make possible supplemental educational programs and opportunities for administrators, teachers, and students." It would, among other things, solicit and accept grants and gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations; invest its funds; provide money for programs "as designated by donors subject to acceptance by the Trust" as well as through a specified grant process; and itself develop and implement projects and programs.

The task force, which calls itself a "core group" and emphasizes that as soon as the trust is formally established it will "disappear," consists of Bill Thurston, Carole Christensen, and school board member Worth Robbins. The group hopes that at a public meeting scheduled for October 23, townspeople will accept this or a modified statement of purpose and bylaws; become members of the trust; elect a maximum of fifteen directors to run it (the core group will nominate several people to that body); and, in general, get the trust and its programs under way. Between now and Octo-

ber 23 the ad hoc group will present its proposals to a variety of town organizations and clubs and possibly make a town-wide mailing.

Explaining why a document that has yet to be accepted is already "so formal," Robbins told the school board that the intention was "to create a vehicle for tax-deductible contributions." The draft bylaws have to be in place, he said, so that the group can begin the process of applying to the state for tax-exempt status. "The stimulus" for forming the trust was "the financial crisis," Robbins went on, but as the three developed the concept, he said, they came to realize that a trust has a broader relevance than a "one-time shot."

"It's another layer of support for school systems," Thurston said, and Superintendent Florence Seldin observed that there are already many such trusts in Massachusetts and nationwide. Christensen added that the core group had looked at similar trusts in Wellesley and Gloucester.

Robbins said that the core group modeled the Harvard Schools Trust after the Harvard Conservation Trust, which supports and supplements the work of the Conservation Commission pretty much as the schools trust would support and supplement the work of the School Committee.

Chairman Chuck Christensen called the trust "a terrific idea" but suggested that proposals for projects and programs "be funneled through the superintendent" to avoid duplication. Seldin noted that the superintendent is usually an ex officio member of such trusts anyway, but the three drafters agreed to consider the suggestion. "We don't want to set school policy," Thurston said. "We just plan to collect money and give it to the schools to spend."