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Parents vow to fight for school after rejection by archdiocese

Saturday January 15, 2005

BOSTON (AP) Parents of students who attend a Catholic school scheduled to close this summer vowed to fight on after the Boston Archdiocese on Friday rejected their proposal to buy the school and keep it open.

"They don't listen to lay people," said William Muti, whose 5-year-old daughter attends Our Lady of the Presentation School in the city's Brighton neighborhood, which has about 100 students in pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade. "They just want us to follow them blindly like the flock of sheep they expect us to be. They don't care about us."

The archdiocese has other plans for the building, although a statement released by Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley does not specify what those plans are.

"Archdiocesan officials are working with Our Lady of Presentation School to assist with the transition process including gathering information regarding the availability of space in seven neighboring Catholic schools and placing faculty and staff on a priority hiring list to assist them in securing employment in other Catholic schools," the statement said.

Some parents with children at the school proposed a plan to buy the school building at market rate. The building has an insured value of \$1.9 million, according to a 2003 archdiocesan assessment.

Church officials first announced the school's closure last fall, but parents requested and received a delay in the closure, now scheduled for June.

The parents' plight has the support of several high profile politicians, including Mayor Thomas M. Menino, state Rep. Steven A. Tolman, and Secretary of State William F. Galvin, who attended the school as a child.

Galvin, who put up a \$100,000 personal letter of credit as surety that the parents would raise enough money to keep the school in the black this year, pledged to help in any way he could.

He told The Boston Globe he found the church's explanation "puzzling" given the archdiocese's stated need to sell properties as it deals with a financial crisis.

"I think the rejection raises more questions than it answers," he said.

Tolman, D-Boston, who represents the neighborhood in which the school is located, hopes to meet with O'Malley and urge him to reconsider. Tolman said, that as a Catholic, he was "frankly outraged" at the archdiocese's decision.

"With all of their excess property, I am just sort of shocked at the outright disrespect, and I believe it is not in the spirit or the mission of everything my church has taught me," Tolman said.

The parents are planning a candlelight vigil on Oak Square Common on Monday to protest the archbishop's decision.

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