

Bill may force closure of Grantsdale

By BRETT FRENCH

The closing of Grantsdale School and the restructuring of class assignments in the Hamilton School District may be the outcome of the recent passage of House Bill 340.

At the May school board meeting, board chairman Jeanne Hargett urged Hamilton's administrators to undertake a four to six-month project examining ways to cut back on the district's operating costs.

"We've talked for a number of years about getting rid of Grantsdale," Hargett told the board. "Now there are some things that might make that necessary. House Bill 340, which was passed by the Legislature this session, will have a very large impact on our funding of the school district.

"Financially, it could have a \$150,000 impact on the district," she added. "We need to look at consolidating schools to save money."

HB 340 revises the method for calculating Foundation Program funding for school districts based on the average number of students belonging (ANB) and goes into effect two years down the road. To qualify for the maximum number of Foundation Program funds, schools must lie more than three miles from the nearest other school of the district. Prior to the passage of HB 340, schools simply had to lie outside the city limits to qualify for the maximum number of dollars — that's where Hamilton got hurt.

Wednesday, Hargett said administrators are preparing lists of alternatives of what grades might be consolidated into the same building. For example, kindergarten through second grades might be housed at Washington School, 3 and 4 at Daly, 5-6 at Westview and 7 and 8 at the high school.

Classrooms would not be overcrowded to accommodate the influx of Grantsdale students, according



BLEAK FORECAST—

With the passage of House Bill 340 the Hamilton School District may realize a large financial loss and the gates to Grantsdale School could be permanently locked. School board chairman Jeanne Hargett, above, has assigned school administrators to outline options if the district is forced to make cuts. (Brett French photo)

plans to go over those maximums."

Hargett said the board will also be looking at: the use of the facilities, impact on students and advantages in terms of expenditures in consolidating classes and staff.

"We'll have the administration draw up recommendations, look at the economic factors involved and the impact on the community with a view to make changes."

However, she said no cuts would be made in the teaching staff

in K through 8," Superintendent C.P. Johnson said, and the high school will be minus about 10 students. But whether enrollment will continue on a downward trend is still unknown.

To keep Grantsdale in operation, Hargett said cuts would have to be made in programs not required for accreditation such as the Gifted and Talented program, extra-curricular activities and advance classes at the high school.

effect for two years. And Hargett said in that time the Legislature could decide to up the financial support for schools. However, that's an unknown.

"In the meantime, this is a worthwhile project to get the information and have it under our thumbs," Hargett said. "We're going to examine the options and see how flexible the facilities are."

The board will begin considering the cost-cutting measures at their next scheduled meeting in