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School board faces second recall attempt

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Editor

The reprieve for two Wayne-Westland school board members didn't last very long.

Skip Monit and Martha Pitsenbarger the vice-president and president of the school board, respectively, are the subjects of another recall attempt. They'll face a clarity hearing on Friday.

"We're doing this for our children," said Shawn Maxwell, who filed the petitions. "We don't feel our funds are being spent properly."

Monit and Pitsenbarger were the targets of recall petitions last month, stemming from a con-

tentious round of negotiations with the Wayne-Westland Education Association (WEA), the teachers' union. The negotiations fell off to the point where teachers took part in a four-day work stoppage that was only brought to a halt through court action.

The language was rejected by the Wayne County Elections Board, however. District officials said that was because it was untrue and vague, but Maxwell said that wasn't the case.

"They simply said it was not clear enough," she said.

Maxwell said she hopes to solve the issue and have the language approved on Friday. That's

the first step in the process. Organizers of the recall effort then have to garner enough signatures to have the issue placed on the ballot.

Maxwell said the teacher contract issue wasn't the sole reason behind the recall attempt. She said there were many parents who were dissatisfied with the way they had been treated by board members. They questioned the priorities of the board, too, in issues such as class sizes.

"We just don't think we're being represented in a good way," she said. "We've pretty much lost faith."

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Steve Becher and Ed Turner were initially named in the original recall language. They've since been removed because they are up for election next year. Maxwell said she expects recall language will be filed against Cindy Schofield and William Gabriel next week.

The recall effort has come to the attention of the Education Action Group (EAG), a non-profit organization promoting school spending reform in Michigan. Kyle Olson, vice-president of strategy for the organization, said recall attempts tend to come from a displeased group—such as an employee group—seeking retribution for a school board's attempt to contain

costs. The group pointed out that Maxwell didn't have a voting record in Wayne County.

Maxwell said that was because she only recently moved back to the district after a four-year absence. "We moved back into the area because of the schools," she said. "I am a registered voter in Wayne County."

Monit said he and Pitsenbarger have seen a lot of support from throughout the district. He said he's ready to fight the recall election, if it comes to that.

"They still have a lot of work to do," he said. "They have to get a lot of signatures on the petition and they have to maintain their enthusiasm."

"All we can do is give out the right information. We'll be doing a lot of that in the coming months."