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Alumni sue to keep school open

Tom Gallagher | Jul. 15, 2009 NCR Today

The fight over the fate of Towson Catholic High School in Maryland escalated Tuesday when the alumni association filed suit [1] against the school's parish and its pastor over the abrupt closing of the school. The group is seeking an injunction to keep the school open at least another year.

"This closing is a slap in the face to the alumni and to anyone who ever loved this school. We were ready to remedy this through various options, but we could not get the [Baltimore] archdiocese to the table," said alumni association president Paul Mecinski, who announced the lawsuit at a rally last night.

Mark Graber, professor of law and government at the University of Maryland School of Law, has said an injunction might be difficult but is possible, given that many parents had paid their deposits and begun making tuition payments for the new school year.

"If they have put down money, the parents have fulfilled their part of the contract with the school, in the understanding that there is going to be a school," Graber said.

... The pastor has pointed to declining enrollment and a $650,000 deficit as the main factors in the decision to close the 87-year-old school on the grounds of Immaculate Conception parish. "Enrollment problems created financial problems," said Leo Ryan, president of the parish council, who led the meeting last night.

Tinder told The Catholic Review, which is published by the archdiocese, that the high school had evolved from a parish school into a facility educating "a different community of people." Only 17 of the more than 160 students enrolled for the fall were parishioners and 86 percent of the student body live outside of Towson.

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One wonders why the parents, students and alumni are so fired up to save the school, given it has a $650,000 deficit and declining enrollment. How come all this energy wasn't mobilized years ago to make the school an unquestionable success? Why is the closure decision a surprise?

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[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-county/bal-md.co.towson15jul15,0,7653162.story