

# Chariho Regionalization Forum Set by Women Voters Group

The Westerly-Chariho Chapter, League of Women Voters, will sponsor a program on school regionalization for residents of the Chariho regional district on Jan. 31 at 7:30 p.m. at the district high school in Wood River Junction, Richmond.

Mrs. Patricia Clark of the women's league, last night invited the Richmond School Committee members to attend the program. Mrs. Clark said all interested citizens of Charlestown, Richmond and Hopkinton which form the Chariho district, are also invited.

Mrs. Clark said the forum would be in two parts. Edward Wilcox, superintendent of Jamestown schools, will speak on the benefits of regionalization and will be followed by an open hearing for the public.

The Chariho district presently provides the educational program for Grades 7 to 12 for the three towns. Recent developments in the three towns have indicated a need for additional elementary facilities to house Grades Kindergarten to Grade 6.

Controversy has been brewing for the past few years between the three towns over representation of the district school committee and the sharing of financial responsibility. A number of study groups have explored the problems and returned with recommendations, but the two problems unresolved to date have stood in the way of any concrete action on the part of the district.

Francis Pellegrino, principal of the district complex, and Phillip Kelly, superintendent, reported in the fall on the over-crowded conditions at the junior-senior high school and the resulting restrictions on the educational programs. Both educators also outlined a number of alternate methods of facilities to alleviate the situation.

Hopkinton members on the district committee have indicated a desire to see the three towns regionalize from Grades Kindergarten to 12. Charlestown members led by William S. Penhallow, Chariho committee chairman, have opposed such a move until fi-

ancial and representation problems are solved.

At a meeting in the fall, district committee members in general supported a regionalization concept based on Grades 5 to 12, commonly referred to as a middle school complex and a high school facility. Grades Kindergarten to 5 would remain in the individual towns.

Mr. Kelly said last night that arrangements were being made for committee members and town council members of the three towns to tour facilities in nearby Connecticut and in the state to explore the various types of facilities available.

James Hurley, Richmond committee chairman and a member of the Chariho group, said last night he welcomed the league's program as an opportunity for committee members to learn "where the public stands" on the issue of regionalization.

Mrs. Clark said the open hearing following Mr. Wilcox's presentation, would provide citizens an opportunity to express their opinions on the matter.