

Patterson weighs facts in death probe

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson says his department soon will have a decision on whether it will press criminal charges against the Farmington School District or school staff as a result of the electrocution death of a 15-year-old East Junior High School student.

Patterson said Tuesday he has received all the investigative reports from his staff, the Farmington Hills Police Department and the State Police crime lab in Plymouth.

"The final reports are quite extensive and it will take some time to go over them

thoroughly. We should have a decision by the end of this week or early next week at the latest," Patterson said Tuesday afternoon.

"We are reviewing the reports now and after we have finished going over all the facts and laws that apply in this case, we will make our decision whether or not to prosecute."

PATTERSON SAID he would not want what charges, if any, would be brought against the school district or its staff. The prosecutor's office received an exten-

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sive report from the Farmington Hills Police Department three weeks ago and since then has been reviewing the results Robert Kourjian, an eighth grade stu-

dent at East, was electrocuted Jan. 9 in a shop class when he attempted to unplug a defective buffer machine from an ungrounded extension cord.

In a related matter, the Michigan Department of Labor last week said it is preparing legislation going state inspectors jurisdiction to regularly inspect school workshops.

A spokesman for the department said their action was taken partly as a result of the electrocution at East.

The Farmington School District was cited for 25 violations of the state's Occupa-

tional Safety and Health Act after the department conducted an investigation of the school's shop after the accident.

The district was ordered to correct 13 violations by March 23.

PRESENTLY, THE department makes regular checks of all businesses in the state, but it without statutory authority over school workshops of students.

The proposed legislation would require routine inspections of all work-shop areas in secondary schools throughout the state, the a department spokesman said.

Farmington Observer-Excentric

Volume 87 Number 56 Thursday, February 19, 1976 Farmington, Michigan 52 Pages Twenty Five Cents

Rescue debate a draw; volunteers stay on duty

By STEVE BARNARD

Farmington Hills residents will be getting double-barreled human rescue service through the end of June.

That's the decision of the Farmington Hills council, which this week voted to enter a contract with a private ambulance company. At the same time the city will continue its use of the volunteer firefighters for human rescue.

But Councilmember Joan Dudley urged residents to become educated about human rescue because another decision will be made when the contract expires in June.

"There is no quick solution to the ideal human rescue service," she told the overflow crowd.

"The council isn't taking an irrevocable step. We will be going to the public and talking to the members of the voting community. If we find that the majority of the people want to pay for a public human rescue service then we can have an election," she said.

DUDLEY URGED that the city administration continue its evaluation of the two services. Input from concerned residents was also necessary in the evaluation, she said.

"We've got a big job ahead of us. We can't do it this week, or next week, but we can, and will, do it."

The council made its decision after listening to a presentation by the volunteers on how they could handle the rescue service.

The debate ensued three weeks ago when the council had instructed City Manager George Majors to investigate the possibility of entering a contract with the Farmington Hills Ambulance Company.

At that time volunteers expressed dismay at the way in which the decision was a contract had been made. The original proposal came under the city manager's report and was not listed on the agenda.

The council was split on this week's decision. Councilmembers Dudley and Fred Lieb-

man voted against continuing the volunteer service. Mayor Earl Oppenheimer voted against signing the contract. He maintained there were too many sections of the proposed contract with which he disagreed.

"I can't see having 10 or 12 men report for an emergency medical call," said Dudley.

Because of the duplicate service, both the ambulance company and the volunteers will respond to emergency calls.

STATISTICS provided by both the city administration and volunteers show that an average of 10 volunteers report for emergency calls after 5 p.m. This would be in addition to the two Hills ambulance company personnel.

Majors has been instructed to study ways in cutting down on the number of volunteer personnel responding to calls during evening hours.

Lichtman agreed with Dudley's assessment.

"I can't see calling every available man for every run. It seems wasteful," he said.

Lichtman had proposed that volunteers be used as back up, if the ambulance company personnel were in service. His motion was defeated.

Oppenheimer objected to the contract, saying it didn't specify a central location for the ambulance company rig.

"I just can't vote for this contract," said Oppenheimer. "It only requires that one ambulance be in the city. We ought to be able to control where the ambulance will be located, besides just in the city," he said.

Presently, the Hills ambulance company offices are at Ten Mile and Middlebelt.

Council members discussed having the company's rescue rig work out of city hall facilities at Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake. The possibility was dismissed be-

cause of a lack of dormitory facilities for drivers.

Oppenheimer also said the other companies that he approached to see if the service could be obtained more inexpensively.

"We ought to investigate why we can't obtain service from another ambulance company at a more advantageous price," Oppenheimer told his colleagues.

Under the contract, the city will pay the ambulance company \$2,000 a month through June 30 for the emergency medical service.

The ambulance company will transport patients. Those being transported will pay a separate fee to the ambulance company. The \$2,000 pays for the emergency medical service.

After debating the issue for three hours, the council voted on the two separate services. Councilmembers Jan Dolan, Keith Deacon, Earl Oppenheimer and Bob McCormell voted to continue the volunteer service.

Only Oppenheimer voted against signing the contract. Councilmember James Smith was absent because of illness.



Midnight blaze

Firemen from three Farmington Hills fire stations responded to this early morning blaze that completely destroyed a vacant house at 26205 Power Road in Farmington Hills. The fire was reported at 2:12 a.m. Wednesday and firemen battled the blaze for several hours before bringing it under control. No injuries were reported and cause of the fire is under investigation by the Hills detective bureau. (Photo by Joe Kennedy)



Workin' hard

Trying to make the ride a little smoother for area residents, Farmington DPW workers Greg Morna (left) and Greg Kuczewski work on city roads, patching potholes and leveling the bumps along the way. (Staff photo by Harry Mautho)

Increase shot down Tax renewal vote gets board nod

The Farmington school board Tuesday night unanimously voted to put a four-mill tax renewal request before district voters in a special election to be held Tuesday, April 6.

The special millage election is needed to renew the four mills of operating revenues that expire at the end of this school year, school officials said.

At the same time, the board also defeated a motion that would have placed a millage increase of up to four additional mills on the ballot.

"I have estimated our budget to be about \$28,200,000 for the 1977-78 school year. That is higher than last year and if we don't renew at least the four mills that are expiring as of the 1975 year, then we will have to make further cutbacks in our school system," said William Prisk, district business manager.

"We need that renewal to continue operating close to the level we are now. But since the state has made cutbacks in state aid, we need the millage renewal and possibly more to continue operating at our present levels."

THE MILLAGE renewal, if passed by area voters, would be a net renewal of four mills for the district. It would provide the school system with \$1,811,540 in operating revenue for the 1976-77 school year. The district will receive \$403,233 from each mill.

The board agreed on the millage renewal at question but split on the request for additional millage.

Trustee Dr. Mervyn Ross proposed a motion requesting that the board be able to levy up to four additional mills to maintain school programs next year comparable to the 1975-76 school year.

Only Ross and Board President William Corliss supported the motion.

"I am concerned about maintaining programs in our school district but I am also concerned about the increasing tax loads on our district. We are supposed to provide the best programs available with the dollars we have available," said board member Gary Lichtman, who opposed the motion.

"But we must show some fiscal responsibility. We must consider a lot of things before we consider a millage increase. The easy way out of our present belt-tightening condition would be to ask for more mills," he continued.

"The hard way out would be to look at our expenditures and see where we might be able to make cutbacks or continue at present levels. Since the state has cut about six per cent from our budget, maybe we should consider taking a six per cent cut in all areas."

TRUSTEE MICHAEL Shpence agreed with Lichtman and said that the board can-

not keep draining the people in the community by increasing the millage to make up for funds cut by the state.

Corliss defended the motion saying that an increase in millage would only provide for those additional mills the district needs to maintain existing programs. The district possibly wouldn't have to levy the entire four mills that were requested.

"I support this motion because based on all the facts we have now, we need more than four mills that hopefully will be renewed in April," Corliss said.

"We are told by the administration that we won't be able to continue existing program next year if we don't have a millage increase."

"If we want to put the millage increase question before the voters in the June election, I don't think we will know any more than we know now."

"We can't wait. I think a millage increase is for the April 6 ballot the only practical way out of this dilemma. The reasons for the millage renewal are just as valid for an increase. We must ask the community will you please not ask us to tighten our belts anymore. If they do, we will have to do without a lot of programs," he said.

Several of the board members felt that the district should wait until it knows what its financial position will be regarding state school aid.

"WE SHOULD wait until we know all the facts before making a request for additional millage," said Trustee Emma Makonen. "We must first find out what the state is doing and how we stand with state funds."

Board member William Grouvas didn't think the district would have all the financial facts it needs to make a millage increase decision in time for the June elections. But he said the millage committee's recommendation was that the board only ask voters for the four mill renewal in the April special election.

Possibly if we wait for the June election to put the extra millage vote before the voters, the state and district might be a little more clear on where they stand," said Shpence.

But we don't know where we stand now and I think we should take only one thing at a time. Right now we know we need the millage increase and that is what we should go into. All the in the future at things become a little more clear, we can add the millage increase request," Shpence said.

If the district decides to change its motion to include a millage increase on the April ballot, it has 30 days before the election to make the change. If the board wants to make any revisions to the ballot it must do so by the first board meeting in March, Prisk said.

City joins crusade in water rate battle

The Farmington City Council authorized the spending of \$18.45 as part of the legal costs in the suburban fight against the Detroit Metro Water System.

"It would appear at this point that because of the lack of cooperation on the part of the City of Detroit in providing the information essential to determine whether or not the suburban users are being treated fairly, litigation may be the only way to resolve the question," a proposed report signed by City Manager Robert Desmond said.

The report said a proposed water rate increase may not be necessary and may be unfair to the suburbs.

The percentage increase in water rates being considered by the Detroit Metro Water System would benefit users who are paying the least for water and would be

detrimental to users paying the most, the report said.

Farmington pays \$1.64 per 1,000 cubic feet and its payments will increase 64 cents under the proposed rate hike.

The 1976-77 budget includes the hiring of 103 additional water employees and an additional 117 employees for the sewer system. The salaries of the new employees would require a rate hike, the report explains.

"To date, the water board hasn't received any empirical data that would substantiate the need for these additional employees," the report said.

Farmington joins a group of suburbs who agree with Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara that the rate increase is unwarranted and are filing suit against the Metro Water System.

inside

News	Section A
Columns	11
Letters	14
Suburban Life	Section B
Community Calendar	3
Bridge	4
Club Circuit	4
Sports	Section C
Business	4, 5
Amusement	6
Classified	10

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