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School district finds itself in cash flow bind

By LYNN ORR

And it looks like Lansing's at fault. "We're really hurting in a cash-flow situation because the state isn't paying out what we're supposed to get," says Asst. Superintendent of Finance and Services, William Prisk.

"The law has been that the state would pay 75 per cent of the added costs of special education; but they only paid 62 per cent of that 75 per cent figure for 1975-76," he explains. Within the last few weeks, Prisk discovered that the state intends to pay only 53 per cent of the 75 per cent; or 39 per cent of what the law stipulates.

"This is all after the fact," Prisk says. "The year's done and we've spent all the money assuming we would be reimbursed by the state."

The situation deteriorated further when Prisk discovered that Oakland County Intermediate School District was putting the brakes on their funding.

"Oakland County regularly pays us 66 per cent of the difference but we think now they'll only pay about 50 per cent," he says. And lacking a rainy-day fund, Prisk is in a dilemma as to where the funds will be made up.

"It has to be made up this year, possibly from the 1977-78 budget," he says, and that could leave the district with some cash problems.

RENEGING by the state isn't Prisk's only worry. With present

basic state aid membership formula, Farmington could lose all non-categorical funding within the next few years.

"Local taxpayers would be paying the full ticket," he said. Categorical state aid (to reimburse the district for special education, transportation, and

other special programs) might be the only state funding available.

Another concern involves the proximity of the 50 mill limit, which would prevent the district from going to the taxpayers for additional millage.

The total millage of an intermediate school district, the county, township,

community college and school district under current law cannot exceed 50 mills, and Farmington is currently paying at the 49.25 level.

"That's 3/4 mill away," he says, "and we might not be the first to go to the residents for that 3/4 mill increase."

Housing hassle sits in limbo

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

The senior citizen zoning controversy which has raged through Farmington Hills for a year could end within the next few weeks if the city council decides that there isn't a pressing need for elderly housing.

Until council members make a decision, a public hearing on the two controversial zoning amendments planned for August 23 is in limbo and possibly could be canceled.

Plans to move the zoning discussion into the city council chambers materialized when Planning Commission members revealed Thursday that they were solidly against the bid to bring mid-rise senior housing into the city's RCE-1 zoning. Two of the Planning Commissioners refused to back RCE zoning, which would set aside land for low rise senior housing saying that the existing ordinance could handle the need for elderly housing in the city.

Planning Commission members exhibited their qualms about the zoning after the Housing Commission presented the results of the city's senior housing survey, Thursday evening. The results indicated that 582 persons or 15 per cent of the seniors needed housing help.

THE PRESENTATION didn't convince the Planning Commission of the need for both RCE and RCE-1 zoning.

"We're dealing primarily with a need. It would be a shame to go to a public hearing without knowing where the city council stands," said Planning Commission Chairman Dave Stader.

Since the city council requested the commissions to carve out a senior zoning proposal, Stader pointed out that the matter doesn't have a formal proponent. If both the Planning Commission and the City Council decide that there isn't a need for senior housing in the city, the public hearing could be canceled, according to Stader.

Planning Commissioner Fred Hughes supported the idea of continuing with the public hearing.

"I think we created such a public issue that I think it would be wise to hold a public hearing. It think it would be very foolish not to hear a public hearing on both issues," he said.

Although the commission was split on the issue of a hearing, it was unanimous in its support to RCE-1, which would allow mid-rise buildings up to 60 feet high.

"Once you out RCE-1 on the books—this is a nice and desirable

community and developers will come in to make a profit," said Stader. I don't want to take the chance that the needs of senior citizens aren't strong enough to introduce high rise.

"IF WE DON'T feel the need for a mid-rise, if statistics don't indicate the need for it, then I don't see the need for a public hearing," he said.

Mid-rise zoning would pave the way for Southfield-like construction and change the lot profile of a bedroom community, Stader added.

Housing Commissioner Jan Dolan said that it is unlikely developers would line up for a chance to use RCE-1.

The threat of the mid-rise zoning spilling over into other areas of the city was seen by Planning Commissioners Edgar Raedle and Hughes. They also opposed RCE which would allow for special zoning of low rise senior housing.

"We can do it with the ordinances we have. There are enough senior citizen housing starts now to predict the future—that there will be more starts," said Raedle, who made no distinction between private and public housing already available in the city for the elderly.

Special zoning should be used for buildings that are compatible with single family areas, according to Hughes. Even though RCE would allow only low rise senior dwellings, Hughes disagrees with placing any multiple dwellings into a single family area.

Churches, schools and recreational facilities are usually covered in special zonings, according to Hughes. Those buildings belong in single family neighborhoods.

PROVISIONS FOR lowrise senior housing were supported by the remaining five members of the seven member commission.

Although supporters of mid-rise have said that the higher buildings would be more economical for seniors and developers, Stader argued that land could be donated or sold at a lower price to make low rise elderly housing feasible.

Unused church property could be donated or sold at a lower price, he suggested.

"We don't know who might die and donate land to the community for a tax break. It would be a nice gesture," he said.

He cited the gift of the Community Center as an example. Not only was it a nice gesture but the family received relief from taxes, too, according to Stader.

Declining enrollment aid plan will help a little, but...

Farmington School District officials are pleased with the declining enrollment provision of the school aid bill signed into law by Governor Milliken last week—but the district will still see less money from state coffers.

A projected student loss of 740 students will provide about \$101,000 to the district under the declining enrollment provision. Milliken had vetoed a similar provision last year, angering many districts suffering student loss, but it was expected that the governor

would keep the provision this year.

However student loss and property tax assessment increases will cost the district more than \$1 million in basic state aid funding for the 1977-78 school year, despite the fact that the per pupil allowance was increased.

The 1976-77 budget included \$3.6 million in basic state aid, while the 1977-78 budget projects \$2.5 million under the formula signed into law by the governor.

Student population declined from 14,607 students enrolled last year to a projection of 13,867 students this fall. The district expects to receive about \$180 per student under the school aid bill signed last week.

Last year the district collected about \$246 per student in basic state aid; but a 10 per cent increase in assessed valuations in the Farmington area, along with the student loss, de-

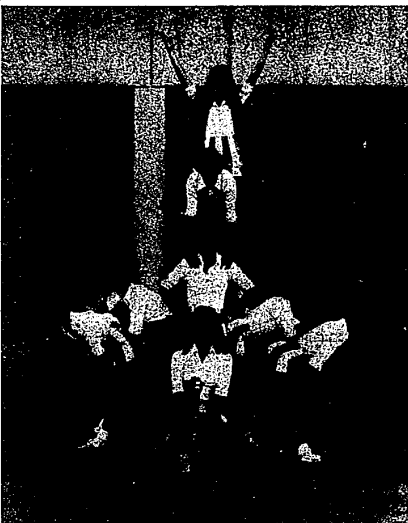
creased the funding.

The school district will realize about a 3 per cent increase in their total budget, projecting about \$27 million in total revenues from state, federal, and local sources.

In its final form, the school aid bill totals \$1,359 billion an increase of nearly \$49 million over the governor's original recommendation to the legislature in January.

The governor vetoed three line items in the bill—\$30 million provision for municipal overburden; a \$250,000 appropriation for academically talented programs; and a \$1.45 million appropriation for community school programs.

"None of these programs dramatically affects Farmington," said Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington). But he and school officials were pleased with the bill's outcome.



Spirit conference

Cheerleaders from Farmington's Power Junior High display some of their finest form during the Cheerleaders Spirit Conference at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti. An annual summer affair at Eastern, the conference is a one-week competitive workshop open to all junior and senior high school cheerleading squads. Three sessions are attended by schools representing many states and Canada, with competition based on the squad's grade level. From Power are (going up): Pam Parker, Sue Dunn, Andi Stock and Patty Rosman; (left) Jane Ebel and Ann Sorenson; (right) Missy Murphy and Tina Bona.

Handicapped parking spaces requested

A new city ordinance and an appeal to merchants are being counted on to make finding a parking place in Farmington easier for handicapped motorists.

Farmington City Council members last week approved a new ordinance which would prohibit persons who are not physically handicapped from parking in areas posted and designated for physically handicapped persons.

A valid disabled person's parking sticker would be required of cars using designated parking areas.

In addition, the City Planning Commission is trying to get local merchants to designate parking spaces for the physically handicapped.

"Since the state law, which now requires spaces to be provided in newly constructed parking lots, was not retroactive, the city will have to ask for voluntary participation in this program," said City Mgr. Robert Deadman.

City Council also agreed to offer handicapped parking signs at the city's wholesale cost, to merchants interested in providing the parking spaces.

The city also plans to set an example for the merchants by providing such spaces in all city-owned parking lots.

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SUMMERTIME BLUES

Many area teenagers are spending the summer with lots of time to kill, but there's hardly a consensus on whether they have any real alternative. For more on the story see Page 3A.

Arson suspected

Danish Inn demolished

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Farmington Fire officials are continuing their investigation into last week's fire at the Danish Inn, a lunch-time spot frequented by area businessmen for the last six years.

Public Safety Director Dan Byrnes

said Friday that arson has not been ruled out as the cause. He refused to elaborate.

Officials have ruled out any connection between the early Wednesday morning fire and a call to the restaurant they received the previous morning. The visit involved an in-

vestigation of smoke coming from the building's air conditioning system.

Centered on the southwest corner of the building at Grand River and Brookside, the early morning fire caused an estimated \$100,000 in damages. The restaurant is operated by Richard Benski.

Offices, a storage area, an ice machine and the rear entrance was also damaged. Smoke damage was evident throughout the building, but the dining area escaped fire damage, according to Byrnes.

Firemen rushed to the restaurant at 2:30 a.m. Wednesday after a passing motorist stopped at the Farmington Police Station to report seeing smoke coming from the restaurant.

"WHEN THE FIRST pumbers arrived, there was thick grey smoke coming from the back and the vents," Byrnes said.

Three pumbers—including one from Farmington Hills—used to fight the fire.

Extra equipment from both departments was at the scene but was unused.

Officials called in the extra equipment because they became concerned that the fire would spread to the false ceiling and get out of control.

The blaze was extinguished within an hour, but firemen remained for several hours putting out small fires and cleaning up.



Smoke billows from the back of the Danish Inn as Farmington firefighters work to contain the blaze early Wednesday morning. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Reserve Public Safety Officer Gall Haenke does her part to help extinguish the blaze at the Danish Inn, Farmington. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)