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Twenty-Five Cents

School trustees ponder millage boost

By LYNN ORR

Although Farmington residents are being asked to support a four-mill renewal on April 5, the Farmington school board may request additional millage to maintain present school services as well as make some improvements.

That's what the first look at the preliminary budget for 1977-78 indicates as the board went through the first run of examining expenditures and revenues at an open study session Thursday night.

"This budget presumes a successful passing of the four-mill renewal on April 5," said Supt. Lewis Schulman. Proposed expenditures of \$27.7 million fall about \$1.5 million short of the \$29.14 million expected in revenues, according to the budget prepared by Business Mgr. William Prisk.

Farmington taxpayers currently are paying 38.5 mills for school tax, with the four-mill renewal included in that tax sum.

The proposed budget calls for an additional 1.2 mills to hold the line on schools services; 2.7 mills to make improvements included in the proposed budget; and three mills to add other improvements.

EACH MILL IS expected to generate about \$335,000 for the district next year, according to Prisk's studies. Taxpayers pay \$1 per mill on each

\$1,000 of the assessed value of their homes, about 50 per cent of the market value of the home.

If a home is worth \$60,000 on the market and assessed at \$30,000, the owner will pay \$1.15 in school tax in Farmington at present millage rates.

A one, two, or three-mill increase would cost the owner of the \$60,000 home \$20, \$80, and \$90 respectively more per year in school tax.

The proposed budget estimates revenues at about \$18.5 million in local tax; \$5.5 million from state sources; \$100,000 from federal sources; and \$1.7 million from other districts.

State aid is expected to drop by about \$100,000 due to a projected enrollment decline of 740 students next year.

"One of the things we must consider and realize is that we have declining enrollment plus increased costs," Prisk said. "If our enrollment goes down, we lose more in revenues than we can account for in the budget."

The budget includes closing Ten Mile School and still leaves us in a deficit situation."

Additional millage is necessary to maintain present services because of the higher costs of health insurance and fuel, according to Prisk.

"There are some items you just can't place a limit on," he said. "For example, in health insurance one carrier has told us to expect a 35 per cent increase while another carrier has given us a 30 per cent increase."

"I'VE PROJECTED a 20 per cent

increase in fuel costs for next year."

"It looks to me as though there would still be a need for additional millage if we held extra costs to eight per cent," commented Trustee Mervyn Ross. Prisk agreed.

Budget improvements included in the proposed budget are an improved pupil-teacher ratio back to 1975-76 standards; a K-12 academically able program at a cost of about \$100,000; a computer math program; and \$100,000 allocated to improvement of buildings and sites.

"Buildings and ground departments exceeded all other department lists in their requests," said Prisk. "They reflect the difficulties this district has had."

"I think we're all disturbed that we

couldn't have more money allotted to grounds and repairs, but we think this budget is a reasonable approach, not pie in the sky," said Schulman.

Additional improvements requested by the administration but not included in the proposed budget are: an increased girls' sports program at a cost of \$17,000; additional safety items priced at \$45,850; data processing of student files priced at \$14,000; reinstatement of custodial cleaning hours to 1975-76 levels priced at \$64,000; and a \$15,000 audit for energy conservation.

The audit would put a price on adjusting the heating and ventilating systems of school buildings to conserve energy, Schulman explained.

Vows to continue work

Artist undaunted by thievery

By LYNN ORR

North Farmington High School senior Bob Stoler captured three prizes in the regional Scholastic Art Show now on exhibit at Northland Center, but unfortunately someone captured his best piece earmarked for entry in the national show in New York.

"It was a bitter pill to swallow," says the young artist, who now regrets entering his medallion of Jimi Hendrix in the show. "People tell you 'I know how you feel,' but no one can know what it's like to have 250 hours of work stolen."

Stoler's art instructor, Daryl Case, whose students have been active in the scholastic competition for all of his eight years at NFHS, shares Stoler's disappointment with the exhibit. "The whole thing has left a bad taste in my mouth," says Case. He added that another student's work was smashed when a table fell over.

"Nothing can replace the value of what these kids have put into their work," Case said.

The medallion, which hung on a leather cord, never shown up at the Northland exhibit, after winning a

Gold Key in the competition judged at the downtown J. L. Hudson store. The original design resembled a popular photograph of Hendrix from his album "A Side of White," with white balloons filed and polished as a scarf on the singer's head.

Stoler estimates he could have sold the piece for about \$150, although he wouldn't have parted with it.

"It was the first time I did anything like that—it just represents a lot of hours. I doubt that I'll see it again."

Stoler is also unhappy about the official attitude toward the theft.

"Be Gregory, who's head of the show, told my mother I never should have entered the piece if I cared so much about it," he says.

FORTUNATELY the industrious senior from Farmington Hills has too many irons in the fire to worry about his piece for long, and he's busy creating another medallion of a jazz figure, similar to the Hendrix piece.

Two abstract ceramic vases won him a blue ribbon and a Gold Key in the regional show, and the Gold Key winner will be Stoler's representation in the New York show.

Art is just one of Stoler's interests.

He dabbles in photography, developing his own pictures; carries a 38 average at NFHS; and works after school and on weekends at a local fruit market to earn his spending money and pay for a planned trip to Europe this summer.

"I don't want to take money from my parents," he says. "I've been working since I was 14, and I still have enough time to do what I like and get my homework done."

Recent discussions with a friend's Yiddish-speaking relative spurred an interest in his Russian heritage and the official treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union—"I'm just getting into some political things," he says.

HIS LEISURE TIME is taken up playing as much racketball as he can and tutoring a Woodcreek Elementary School student twice a week as part of the Bucket Brigade.

Stoler credits his parents, Dr. and Mrs. William Stoler for allowing him the independence to make his own decisions to allocate his time.

"Most kids just don't know what's going on in the world. I feel sorry for them when they get out of here, they're just not going to make it."

"They're really into popularity and wasting time, and they're parents don't really want them to grow up."

Stoler says he doesn't have a lot of friends at North Farmington, partly because he doesn't share their interests.

"I'm not into a lot of rock and roll, like 'Arrowsmith'; I prefer jazz. And I don't think walking down the hall with my girlfriend is all there is. Kids out here are just awfully young."

Although Stoler has been in Farmington schools for five years and respects his academic training, his opinion of the atmosphere in Farmington compares unfavorably with his memories of his native Oak Park.

"Oak Park was much more liberal, and most of the parents there were like my parents," he says. Farmington parents, he believes, fail to encourage independence in their children.

"My mother's into sculpting, drawing, anything, and I guess you could call her a semi-professional because she sells a lot of things. But she doesn't tell me what to do with my work."



Applying a torch to his piece of jewelry is just the first step in the long process of making a medallion for North Farmington High student Bob Stoler. The hard part, he says, is sanding and filing the aluminum that will become sunglasses on his depiction of a jazz figure. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Mayer blasts tax increase; resigns

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Farmington Historical Commissioner Lawrence Mayer is resigning from the post because he believes the recently increased tax assessments on homes in the historic district will destroy the area.

"I am humiliated and sorry for my part in the historical commission," said Mayer, who owns the florist shop that bears his name at 3364 Grand River.

Property owners in the historical district have seen their assessments increase as much as 75 per cent within the last two years. Mayer plans to fight the increases in the city's Board of Review.

The city assessor's office explains that the homes in the district have remained with the same assessments since 1958.

The lag between increases has left the district's homes behind others in the city in being assessed for 50 per cent of the market value. City Assessor John Sailor has explained.

But Mayer says the assessments are pricing the old homes out of the

market and setting the stage for the ruin of the district.

HE ARGUES THAT the homes were falling apart 15 years ago when he bought his house in the district. The area was scheduled to be zoned for commercial use when the commission was formed.

"Now the city and the assessor can tax these houses because they have been maintained," he said.

"Then they say that they are doing so because the homes in the district are worth more money. In reality, they're worth less," he said.

"They are on Grand River, which is a busy street. There isn't any off street parking and if you put in a driveway, they assess you for that," he said.

Homeowners in the district will find it difficult to pay the increased assessments, he said.

"We can't continue to pay that kind of assessment in the historic district," he said.

"You can take a 10 per cent assessment hike. You just figure it along with your cost of living increase. But when they go up to 70 per

cent, you know that every year, it's still going to go up and up and up."

Mayer believes that the homeowners are being fined for keeping up the appearances of their homes.

"I WON'T EVEN CUT the grass," he said.

"Our house has been assessed so we can sell it at \$80,000. It's impressive looking. But it's not big."

"It has one bath, three bedrooms and an addition. People who are going to spend \$30,000-\$50,000 on a house want four bedrooms, three bathrooms and laundry facilities."

"We've added a pool that was assessed 10 years ago. A 10-year-old pool has a huge maintenance cost," he said.

"The heat and the lighting bills are astounding."

"Someone would be out of his mind to pay \$80,000 for that house," he said.

The city assessors office reported that the older homes are more popular among buyers in recent years. Homes in the historic district have sold for \$40,000, according to recent deeds of purchase.

"These are beautiful houses," Mayers agreed. "But for years they could not be sold because they were derelict. The only house that was kept up 16 years ago was the Warner house."

"Now, because it's in vogue to own an old house, they increase the assessments," he said.

He predicts that the increased assessments will make people reluctant to keep their property in good repair.

"Some of these people have limited incomes. They can't afford to pay the assessments and keep up the houses," he said.

"WE'LL HAVE a nice decayed situation if that happens," he said.

Although his resignation stems from a move that he interprets as being against the best interests of the area, Mayer was skeptical about the formation of a historic district.

"I had a small part in promoting the historical district. It was detrimental to me. That property on Grand River could be expensive if it was used for commercial purposes," he said.



You see this fist?

It's too late for Linus (Keith Naughton) to duck the wrath of his sister Lucy (Cathy Bennet). But never fear, he can find solace for life's bumps in his cherished blanket. Keith and Cathy are rehearsing for Farmington High School's presentation of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." The musical comic strip will be presented March 2-5 at 8 p.m. Children can catch an afternoon performance at 2 p.m. March 5. All performances will be in the school's auditorium. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Contest launched by Founders' group

With an eye toward summer, the Farmington Founders Festival Committee has been meeting to plan the 13th annual festivities which, this year, will run from July 20-24.

The committee, under the general chairmanship of Vincent Dery, has announced a contest to choose the 1977 festival theme.

This year's festival will include such perennial favorites as the Miss Farmington Pageant, the Saturday morning parade, fireworks, the Jaycee championship rodeo, Sunday-In-The-Park, a craft tent as well as numerous carnival activities and booths.

Prizes in the festival theme contest include a \$25 U.S. Savings Bond, widespread use of the slogan and publicity for the contest winner as well as a

place of honor in the parade. The contest is open to any Farmington or Farmington Hills resident. Slogans are limited to 10 words. There is no limit on number of entries per person.

THE FESTIVAL COMMITTEE and their families are ineligible. All entries will become the property of the Farmington Founders Festival Committee and must be postmarked no later than midnight, March 31.

Submit all entries to the Farmington Festival Committee, in care of Farmington Chamber of Commerce, 2715 Farmington Road, Farmington, 48024.

inside

Community Calendar	6B
Editorial Opinion	10A
News	Section A
Sports	7-9A
Suburban Life	Section B
Classifieds	Sections B,C

THEY LIKE FARRAH

Farmington elementary school students named their heroes and heroines in a recent poll. To find out who joined the lofty heights of Farrah Fawcett in their eyes, turn to page 2A.

(Continued on page 11A)