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Twenty-Five Cents

Polls show voucher plan baffles voters

By LYNN ORR

Whether it's a veiled attempt to revive parochial or a radical effort to abolish publicly financed schools and force competition among educators, there's one thing that's clear about the "voucher" amendment:

The vast majority of voters don't understand it.

The voucher system would require a person's school taxes be paid to whatever school his children attend. Now, local school districts get tax money no matter what school a child attends.

Swallowed in the controversy over the Headlee and Tisch tax-cutting amendments, the voucher question landed on the November ballot through a petition drive launched by the Citizens for More Sensible Education, spearheaded by private school proponents.

Voters will be asked to approve the amendment which calls for the abolition of the property tax system of financing public education; directs the state legislature to develop an alternative financing method; and allows parents to give vouchers representing education money to the school of their choice.

But the three-pronged effort remains a mystery to most voters, according to a recent poll conducted by Market Opinion Research for the Michigan Education Association (MEA), the state teachers' union.

Only 20 per cent of those polled in mid-August were familiar with the bal-

ly question, said Al Short, legislative consultant who is coordinating teacher union opposition to the voucher, Headlee, and Tisch amendments.

After an explanation of the amendment to the 50 per cent who needed it, 32 per cent favored the question, 34 per cent were opposed, with most of the rest undecided.

Other sources indicate that the voucher question is pulling ahead in the running. One poll showed 56 per cent of those surveyed favoring the question.

The voucher amendment itself puts public educators on the hot seat. And fear of competition is not the problem, said Rick Ringstrom of the Farmington Education Association, the local teachers' union.

"How can the state add 200,000 parochial students to the rolls without a massive influx of dollars?" he asks. "We're fighting to upgrade the schools," he said, adding that teachers consider the proposed amendment unfair.

Educators generally are opposed to the amendment, said Farmington School Supt. Lewis Schulman.

"To assume that schools will automatically enter the marketplace and compete for students is a false assumption," he said. "The amendment would undercut basic funding and put us on unequal footing."

"I think there's a place for private schools and people who want private education," he said.

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Board rejects land request

By LYNN ORR

The Farmington School Board has rejected a request from Farmington Hills to buy land in the west end of the district. 1 But the board left open the door to consider an exchange of the land for other property in the same area.

City officials have their eyes on 20 acres of school district property north of Eleven Mile and east of Haleswood. The land is next to the San Marino Golf Course, which the city bought this year.

An grant application for \$250,000 to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) includes the acquisition of the land for use as a driving range for the golf course.

The grant has been well received by state officials, although final approval hasn't been reached. The grant requires that the city match the state dollar for dollar.

The city also is looking at an additional five acres of residential property between the district- and city-owned land.

The district-owned site was to be used for a junior high school if growth in the western end of the district warranted expansion. Two committees

that have studied vacant property owned by the district recommended keeping property in the west end.

WITH THOSE recommendations in mind, board Vice-President Michael Shipce suggested rejecting the property sale.

"There's absolutely no way I'm interested in getting rid of that property in any way whatsoever unless the offer was so high it's ridiculous," Shipce said at Tuesday night's meeting.

Citing potential growth in the area, the location's suitability for a second, or third, school, and past dealings with the city, Shipce asked the board to reject the offer without consideration an exchange.

"I'm also concerned that the City of Farmington Hills and the councils in the past have not been very fair to this board, suggesting unreasonably low levels of exchange and then painting us as the bad guys when we're not willing to release property as gifts."

Trustee Emma Makinen countered Shipce's argument, suggesting that recent relations between the two governmental bodies had improved and that the issue should be discussed in present context.

"We are in the same area and serving the same public," she said. The board rejected 4-3 Shipce's motion and voted 6-1 to reject the immediate sale of the property, while indicating it might be interested in the exchange of land. Trustee Janice Rolnick dissented.

WHILE PRICES have not been mentioned, the city's grant stipulates an acquisition of 25 acres of land at a cost of \$250,000. According to other sources, the 30 acres of district property is valued between \$400,000-\$500,000, or about \$22,500 an acre.

The city bought San Marino for \$1.1 million. The nine-hole golf course included 75 acres of property valued at \$15,000 an acre, said City Clerk Floyd Cairns. The city bought the property for \$15,000 an acre, plus a storage shed, office facilities, and equipment.

It is not known what alternatives the city contemplates if the DNR grant is approved and the school refuses to sell the property. Hills Parks and Recreation Director Doug Gaynor could not be reached for comment.



Surrounded by nature's beauty in an urban setting, Farmington area residents can enjoy a refreshing stroll. Here a lonely golfer mixes his favorite hobby with a walk through the San Marino Golf Course. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

September's the month for fall play

In early September, Mother Nature finds herself at an awkward stage—too late for swimming and too early for sparkling cold evenings.

Somehow, Ma Nature and Man survive the trauma of being unable to complain about the heat and bricker about the cold by embarking on a project known as the fall nature walk.

Obviously, the nature trail allows residents to catch the last bit of good weather while admiring dashes of bright autumn color on the leaves. Secretly nature trail walkers harbor a feeling of virtue for having trudged through the paths and over downed logs. In an era when jogging is king, it gives them an excuse for not running down the road in a powder blue sweat suit.

Farmington area residents can take advantage of the season by walking

through such spots as San Marino Golf course.

Walking through the course involves following the bouncing golf ball over the bridge and through the sand traps. The course at Habersat near Twelve Mile is open from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday through Saturday.

WEEKDAY GOLFERS get a break on the fee. From Monday through Friday, the course charges \$4.25 for using the greens. On the weekends, the fee is \$4.75.

After October, the fees should drop a bit, according to pro-manager Al Marmion.

True golf fanatics, according to Marmion, will play their game in spite of cool weather.

"Michigan golfers will play if there's no snow on the ground," he said.

Golfers in parkas wielding hand warmers along with five-iron brave the weather for that last round before winter sets in, according to Marmion.

For those who'd rather run than walk through fall, the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department sponsors its annual turkey trot early November at the golf course.

For the less athletically inclined, Farmington's city park on Shiawassee and Power and the Orchard Ridge nature trails on the Oakland Community College campus, Twelve Mile and Farmington Road offer opportunities to leisurely stroll through autumn leaves.

OCC's nature trails are inconspicuously situated near the road leading to the school's parking lots.

TREE AND LEAF fanciers can slip

off into the woods to take a look at the tree's fall colors. Trees and plants are identified for spectators via wooden plaques.

For those who want to lose themselves in the fall, Farmington's park is an ideal place to get away from it all during the early afternoon.

With the park's regular visitors still in school, the grassy expanse is fairly deserted.

Last week, the only group sharing the park with the bees were surveyors working to put together a topographical map of Farmington.

Visitors wanting a peek at the fall colors can slip into the park's nature trails, behind the wooden bridge. In addition to colorful leaves, the bridge offers walkers a look at part of the Rouge River minus an auto plant.

Hills searches for HUD alternative

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Farmington Hills residents will have a chance to decide what happens to the housing rehabilitation plan and the sewer system in the city's south end.

That was the determination of the city council this week as they established an ad hoc committee. It was established in lieu of rejecting federal community development block grant money, which would have paid for those projects.

But the money, made available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD),

was considered by a majority of council to have too many regulations attached, so the plan was rejected. Among the regulations was the requirement for low-income housing.

The ad hoc committee was suggested by Councilmember Joanne Smith, who said that residents who opposed the federal program should have a say in how to continue the program on a local level.

At the Sept. 11 council meeting, more than 500 residents turned out to protest the federal program. Many of them pledged to aid the city in carrying through the program on a local

level if the city withdrew from the federal plan.

Among those persons was Don Wolf. At this week's session, Wolf agreed to be on the committee and said that if the council wished, he would serve as the committee chairman.

Yet to be determined by council is the size of the committee.

The decision to form an ad hoc committee came after the council rejected the concept, proposed by Mayor Jan Dolan, to levy a one-mill property tax to finance completion of the sewers and continuation of the city's loans and grants program.

Under the loans and grants program, residents in need of rehabilitating their houses were eligible for either a low-interest loan or an outright grant, depending on how much money the resident had.

But the sentiment of the council was outlined by Councilman Earl Opperhauser, who said it would be unwise to approach the voters for a tax increase when the city didn't have a concrete proposal on how to spend that money.

The ad hoc committee will study alternative financing plans and give its recommendation to the city council.

Sign up now for seminar

Have you ever been stymied in your attempt to get some news in the paper?

If so, you're hoping we can clear up the middle. The staff of the Farmington Observer will sponsor its annual public relations seminar, which gives us a chance to meet you in the community. Hopefully, you'll want to meet us and learn how to get news of your events in our twice-weekly newspaper.

Set for 8 p.m., Oct. 5, at the Farmington Hills Library on Twelve Mile, west of Orchard Lake Road, the informal evening will begin with a brief introduction of the staff and explanation of how our paper operates.

Particularly those who are responsible for their organization's publicity will gain some insight into how best to get your word out to the community. Readers who are interested in getting to know the staff of the newspaper are welcome as well.

The staff finds this evening to be one of the most enjoyable of the year. It's fun matching up faces with telephone voices of many of you we hear from throughout the year.

THROUGH the years, we've discovered that this seminar is one of the best ways of finding out what's going on in the community, as well as learning what you like best (or dislike). (Continued on page 6A)



JAMES L. RYAN

Distributors name president

Fred Blackwood, president of Beaver Distributors of Farmington Hills, Oak Park, Sterling Heights and Grand Rapids has been elected president of Ceramic Tile Distributors of America. The newly formed organization intends to help expand the market for ceramic and quarry tiles by providing product and technical information to architects, designers and specifiers as well as the public through a national network of affiliated tile distributors.

Chamber seeks nominees for citizen of the year

The next Citizen of the Year in the Farmington area may live next door.

Nominations for the annual honor of recognition as an outstanding citizen in the Farmington area are due Oct. 10, and the Farmington Chamber of Commerce anxiously is awaiting this year's nominees.

People eligible for the honor will be chosen on the basis of their contribution to the city. A screening committee selected by the chamber of commerce will choose the top three nominees. The winner will be selected by the chamber's board of directors and introduced to the community at the annual awards dinner Oct. 25.

This is the eighth year the chamber has sponsored the event. Nomination blanks are available at the chamber office at 22715 Farmington Road in the Masonic Temple.

Contribution to the community covers the period between Sept. 1, 1977-Sept. 1, 1978.

The application includes a brief statement as to what contributions the nominee has made above and beyond job-related activities. The chamber also asks the nominator to summarize briefly why the candidate should be selected for the honor.

Past winners include 1977 Citizen of the Year Mary Ann Reilly; B. John Anhalt; Chuck Schulkins; Ron Holland;

Louis Gilson; Dr. Robert Douglass; and Marlowe Belanger.

THE PRESENTATION of the Citizen of the Year honor will accompany the election of Chamber officers at the annual dinner at the Bistford Inn, Michigan Supreme Court Justice James L. Ryan will speak at the Oct. 25 get-together.

Judge Ryan, 47, was appointed to the high bench in December 1976 and elected to office in November 1978. He is a supervising justice for the Michigan Judicial Institute, and lectures for the National Judicial College in Nevada, the American Academy of Judicial Education in Washington, D.C., and is an adjunct professor of law for the University of Detroit Law School.

He is active in many legal professional associations and is a member of the board of directors of the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, the Donald M. Barton Memorial Foundation in Detroit, and the University of Detroit Law School Alumni Association.

A commander in the Judge Advocate General Corps in the U.S. Naval Reserve, Judge Ryan served on the circuit court in Wayne County before his election to the Supreme Court.

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