

Farmington Observer

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Vandalism toll for school year is \$40,000

By MARY GNIEWEK

Vandalism and theft of school property cost Farmington school district taxpayers almost \$40,000 this year, according to a report released by school administrators at this week's school board meeting.

School officials hope to recoup some of the loss from the recent \$3,300 North Farmington High School vandalism spree, but insurance coverage will pay only \$2,885 of the total \$39,266 in damages incurred districtwide.

According to the report, only one school building, Cloverdale Training Center, didn't sustain any damage during the 1979-80 school year. Cloverdale houses special education offices and

classes for severely mentally impaired students.

The three district high schools accounted for the biggest loss, reporting \$23,884 in damages. North Farmington topped the field with \$10,501, followed by Harrison High School with \$3,806. Farmington High School suffered \$3,575 in damages.

The districtwide loss is down from the average of the last three years, which fluctuated between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

"It's less than other years, but we're not thrilled with \$40,000," said Lewis Schulman, school superintendent.

"We'd like to get the figure down to a negligible amount."

The figures were computed from

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— Lewis Schulman, superintendent.

standard reporting forms submitted by the schools and from vandalism-associated work orders submitted to the school maintenance department. Accidental damage was included.

"THIS YEAR was the most monitored," said William Prisk, assistant superintendent of finance.

He attributed most of the damage to broken windows.

Insurance coverage paid a minimal amount of the total loss because of a non-cumulative deductible clause in the district's insurance policy.

"We computed it out over three years and it's much less expensive this way than paying huge insurance premiums for full coverage," Schulman said.

Insurance coverage is intended to guard the district against catastrophic loss, according to the superintendent.

"There has been a consistent decrease in the dollar amount of damages the five years I have been on the (school) board," said Michael Shpiece, school board president.

"I believe five years ago, the damage was more than \$100,000."

"This year, it's down 20 percent. We aren't satisfied. We are prosecuting whenever we find the responsible person," Shpiece said.

Following is a list of each school in the district and the total amount of damage reported during the school year.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS Alameda \$23; Beechview \$1,125; Eagle \$1,128; Flanders \$275; Forest \$254; Gill \$1,115; Highbrook \$538; Kenbrook \$945; Larkshire \$539; Longacre \$231; Middlebelt \$154; William Grace \$130; Wood Creek \$592; Wooddale \$1,301.

JUNIOR HIGHS O.E. Dunckel \$953; East \$2,129; Power \$467; Warner \$208.

HIGH SCHOOLS Farmington \$3,575; Harrison \$3,806; North Farmington \$10,501.

OTHERS Bond (vacant) \$9; Fairview Early Childhood Center \$438; Farmington Training Center \$1,053; Shiawassee Recreation Center \$2,595; Ten Mile Adult Education \$241.

Sandy says tax reform needs guts

A stormy, late-night session of the state House Taxation Committee last week provided the first indication that Governor William Milliken's coalition property tax proposal, already approved in the Senate, faces more difficult hurdles in the House.

The plan received only two votes of support from the 16-member committee, although there had been speculation that it would be reported to the full House immediately.

The controversy was two-fold. Some members don't think the plan provides enough property tax relief, and others believe the amendment and nine bills implementing it should be considered as a total package.

"House Republicans generally feel the plan could be strengthened through amendments," said state Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington.

Brotherton recently called for an amendment to Milliken's plan that would hike the state sales tax by 1.5 percent and ease property taxes by \$800 million.

Republican members of the Taxation Committee were concerned about the fiscal impact of the bills and amendments.

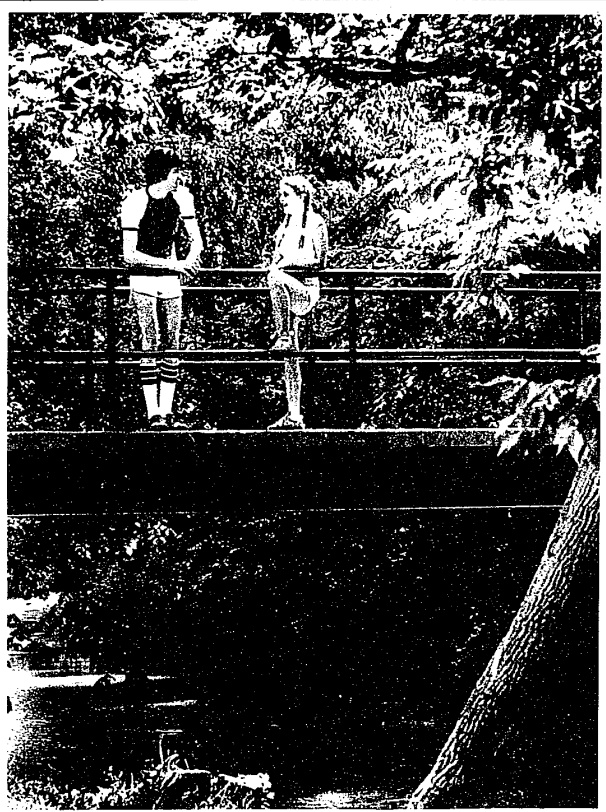
"I think we should take a realistic look at the fact that this proposal is going to provide older communities with low valuation about twice the relief the rest of the state will get," Brotherton continued.

SOME 89,000 homes in Detroit assessed below the \$6,500 exemption level are provided for in the plan and about 200,000 homes state wide.

According to Brotherton, these homeowners will pay no property tax at all while others who may live in a high valuation area and have the same tax bill as someone who lives in Detroit will get about half the relief the urban homeowner will get.

An amendment offered to change the exemption to a flat 30 percent of the individual tax bill fell short by two votes, but will be introduced again when the package reaches the full House.

The committee approved an amendment to provide full reimbursement to local units of government for the lost revenues.



Down in the park

Jeff Barhan and Kim Schwanke found a bridge good place for a chat on a recent sunny summer day, over the Rouge River in Farmington City Park. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Business tax reform eyed by lawmakers

Legislation that would eliminate businesses claiming a loss from paying the single business tax — 2.35 percent of a company's profits, payroll, depreciation and interest for a year — has the support of state Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington, and the Farmington area Chamber of Commerce.

The bill, introduced in the House by state Rep. Nick Smith, R-Addison, is the latest attempt in the state Legislature to free struggling Michigan businesses from the single business tax burden.

"During these difficult economic times in Michigan, I believe it is important that we provide incentives for companies thinking of locating here," Brotherton said.

"We must aggressively promote small business in the state, and struggling enterprises shouldn't be forced to go further into debt to pay Michigan business taxes."

Brotherton and Edward J. Lane, executive director of the Farmington area Chamber of Commerce, came out in opposition last month to a bill introduced by state Sen. Doug Ross, D-Oak Park, to allow small businesses to be taxed on their profits instead of their payroll.

Ross has since offered a new two-bill package. Senate Bill 1160 would eliminate the single business tax for non-profit making businesses. A companion bill, SB1197, would increase the tax by

one-tenth of a percent for profit-making small businesses to make up the expected \$20 million revenue loss.

STEVE WEISS, an administrative aide to Ross, said SB1160 is out of committee and will be addressed by the full Senate before the July 4 summer recess.

Another bill that has been introduced in the House also relates to the single business tax and is now being studied in the House Taxation Committee.

The measure would provide a tax credit to businesses which hire more additional full-time employees than the state's employees' growth average for the past 10 years.

Under the plan, employers would receive up to a \$423 single business tax credit for every new employee exceeding the employment growth rate averaged over the previous 10 years.

In the first year of the worker's employment, the employer could take a 100 percent tax credit; the second year, the employer would be allowed a 50 percent credit.

In order to compute a tax credit, an employer would:

- Figure an average wage for all employees exceeding the state average for the past 10 years. The average would not exceed \$12,000.
- Multiply the number of additional employees by their average wage and then multiply .0235 by the product to come up with the credit.

SEMTA tests half-fare program for jobless

To help offset travel costs for unemployed persons in the metropolitan Detroit area, the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) board has approved a pilot program granting half fare privileges for the unemployed during off-peak hours and weekends.

City of Farmington administrative assistant Jerry Horner said the program, to begin July 1, is one of several transportation options the city council may choose to adopt.

SEMTA will give back to each participating community funds based on license plate fees and transfer fees.

Farmington stands to gain \$7,000, according to Horner.

The city spent \$4,000 in 1979 to operate a subsidized cab program for senior citizen and handicapped residents, so there will be about \$3,000 for some other types of programs," said Horner.

"It depends on what the city council wants to do."

The half-fare program would be in effect weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. and all day Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

Those showing proof of unemployment

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For ecological balance

Botanist fights to preserve dunes

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

For botanist James Wells, the stretches of sand dunes which mark parts of Michigan are more than a pleasant tourist spot or a boon to the sand industry.

Wells of Farmington Hills maintains that some of the stretches of sand have a "unique ecological value" and should be left alone to preserve their plant life.

The associate professor at Oakland University testified twice last year that parts of the area on the other side of the Weko Beach Natural Area in Berrien County should be guarded from industry.

The area is the subject of a Natural Resources Department hearing to determine if it's worth preserving. The privately owned dunes are mined by the Martine Marietta Co. and Manley Brothers firms.

Both companies are involved in shipping sand to industry for use in casting processes.

Sand from Michigan is viewed as being of such high quality that the state



JAMES R. WELLS

provides a large portion of the granules used in industry including auto manufacturing.

The DNR's decision concerning the use of the dunes is scheduled for later this summer but it's expected to be appealed.

FOR WELLS, an assistant to the director of Cranbrook Institute of Science, parts of the dunes should be left alone to preserve its plant life.

"They should serve as a benchmark — they can help us measure what we're doing to ourselves in the environment," Wells said.

The dunes, for Wells, offer a staging ground for some special botanical showmanship.

The dunes, relatively young at 4,000-5,000-years-old host plant life which usually wouldn't be seen growing side by side.

On dunes which receive a northern exposure to the sun, trees indigenous to the north, such as hemlock will grow. Dunes facing south carry trees such as black gum which are usually found in southern climates.

rounding and in the Weko Beach Natural Area.

The virgin forests at Weko, in the state's southwest corner are considered relatively young at 1,000-years-old. There are other virgin forests in the country estimated to be about 11,000-years-old.

THE NATURAL show Wells values is under stress from tourism as well as industry. Dune buggy enthusiasts have ridden roughshod over some of the dunes leaving the sandy area sterile of plant life in a phenomena scientists call a blowout.

Although he doesn't have a say in the final decision concerning the area surrounding Weko Beach, Wells says he isn't interested in seeing industry shut down to save the land.

"We can obviously not save all the state," he said.

While jobs are needed, Wells warns that some day people will pay the price of using the environment without concern for the future.

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