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Schools worry over tax freeze

By MARY GNIEWEK

A plan calling for a one-year freeze on property taxes has raised new worries for Farmington Public School officials.

School Superintendent Lewis Schulman, who oversees the district's \$33 million budget generated more than 80 percent by local taxes, fears the plan introduced by State Senator Doug Ross, D-Southfield, could be extremely damaging.

"The only way we keep pace with inflation is through increases," Schulman said.

"If inflation continues and the tax rate is frozen, we'll have no way of meeting our additional expenses."

Ross plans to reintroduce his package, which passed the Senate but failed in the House Taxation Committee in the closing session of the state Legislature last December.

Three bills will be reintroduced and three more will be added, according to Bob O'Leary, a Ross aide in Lansing.

The bills to be reintroduced would freeze property assessments on the local level for a year, freeze the state equalization process for a year, and enable municipalities like Farmington to levy up to 5 additional mills with voter approval.

Three new bills deal with technical questions related to townships and villages.

THE FREEZE IS only the first step in the three step program, O'Leary explained.

Once the freeze was enacted, it would force the legislature to actually draft or propose a long term solution for property tax relief.

It would give property owners some tax stability, however brief.

It would save business, agricultural and residential property owners across Michigan \$400 million in 1981, according to O'Leary.

The state would absorb \$80 million of the loss, with the balance divided between local governments and school districts.

The three bill package was introduced in the Senate last Nov. 24 and passed by large bi-partisan majorities on Dec. 5.

Besides being in a position of asking district voters to approve a higher millage rate, opposition from one Farmington School Board member centers on two other areas.

"I'm leery of temporary measures because most often, temporary becomes permanent," said Janice Rolnick, a trustee.

"Also, it seems that K-12 education in Michigan is losing its priority position. That scares me."

The school board met with Ross and State Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington, Tuesday night to raise its concerns.

Trustee Michael Spieck had neither a pro nor con position.

"I DON'T KNOW if this is the solution," he said. "There are arguments on both sides. It could limit our revenue — I haven't had a chance to look at those figures."

"On the other side, people seeing 18 to 25 percent increases in property assessments have a right to be concerned."

Brotherton opposes the Ross package on yet another front.

"I don't care much for the approach because it will lock in for another year all of the inequities that presently exist around the state," he said.

"We know that we've been very conscientious in assessing properties in Farmington as close to market value as possible whereas other parts of the state, like Dearborn, have been guilty of underassessing."

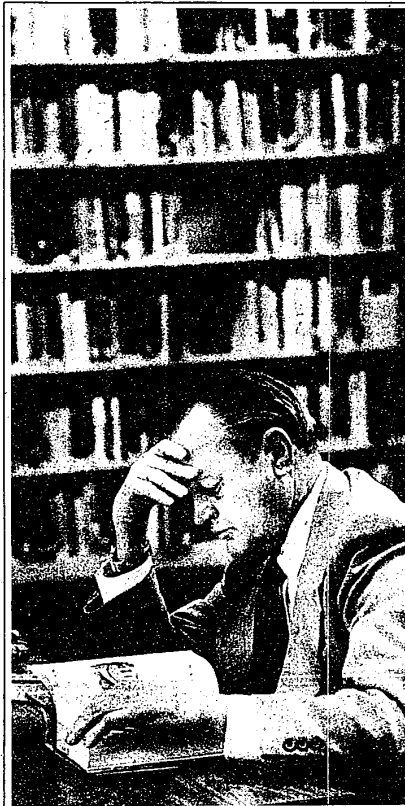
"Also, we were supposed to begin this year equalizing assessments by class."

"The new law would take residential, commercial, industrial and undeveloped property as four separate categories and apply separate assessment factors to each."

"If the Ross proposal was adopted, that plan would fall by the wayside for another year."

Equalizing assessment by class would eliminate abuses like underassessing residential property while overassessing industrial to make up the difference, or overassessing residential to underassess commercial property.

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The thinker

Frank Wrinn of Farmington has found a good way to spend part of a cold and blustery day by reading in the downtown Farmington branch of the library. Turn to Page 3A for more ideas on what you can do indoors for the rest of the winter. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

City hall gets new assistant

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

William Costick, 37, has joined the Farmington Hills administrative ranks as assistant city manager, a newly created position.

He will be paid \$37,000 annually, according to City Manager Larry Savage.

Costick comes Farmington Hills on the heels of the resignations of Michael Dorman, assistant to the city manager, who is now Walled Lake city manager, and Department of Public Services Director Ralph Magid, who will leave the city on Jan. 23 to fill a similar position in San Clemente, Calif.

Up until August of 1979, the Michigan State graduate had served in a number of public sector jobs, including Flushing city manager and Troy assistant city manager.

He left Troy to try his hand in the private sector.

"I really missed it (the public administration) when I got out," he says.

"I tired of the private sector. I heard about the Farmington Hills position, and that's when Larry (Savage) and I began to talk about it."

Savage is enthused over the acquisition of his city-hall lieutenant.

"HE COMES HIGHLY recommended," says Savage. "He will add a lot to our organization. We've got a number of departments without proper coordination."

Costick holds a bachelor's degree in political science, with concentrated study in public administration, urban planning and public finance. He earned master's in community resource development.

He began his career in 1966 as an administrative assistant to the Fenton

city manager. He moved from there to East Lansing the next year, where he took on a similar position.

Although he will act initially as a trouble-shooter at city hall, Costick was responsible for a number of specific departments while serving in Troy. Those included public works, public services and community development and planning activities.

Costick's major responsibility during his 18-month tenure was the Big Beaver Study Steering Committee.



WILLIAM COSTICK

He spent many hours listening to opposing views on the controversial development of that corridor.

He gained a reputation of being able to work with the public.

"Communications is the key when working with the council, staff and the public," says Costick.

Heads west

DPS chief resigns

Farmington Hills' Public Services Director Ralph Magid has resigned his position to take on a similar job in San Clemente, Calif.

Magid, 41, started with the city seven years ago in the building and zoning department. Since that time, the public services department has grown to 85 persons, with Magid as its chief supervisor.

"In some ways, it's difficult to make the change, considering the friends I have made," said Magid. "But this is the best time to move, considering the economy around here."

Throughout his tenure in the Hills, Magid has been a controversial figure, many times suffering the brunt of anger from residents upset over the condition of the roads in Farmington Hills.

But Magid managed to weather the protests with his well-known dry sense of humor.

"I have found that the past seven years have been enlightening (most of the time), rewarding and most of all

challenging," Magid said in his resignation letter, noting the many confrontations in parenthesis.

He is looking forward to his new position in San Clemente, which is between Los Angeles and San Diego.

"They have an older community around a central district, which is developing into the surrounding area. It is an exciting and dynamic challenge," he said.

One of Magid's biggest challenges has been the controversial dust control program. For years, residents have debated the merits of calcium chloride versus oil to contain dust on unpaved roads during the summer.

Magid always was caught in the middle. A graduate of Wayne State University, he has worked in the Oakland County Road Commission. He is familiar with the California scene, having worked in Whittier for a number of years.

His final day will be Jan. 23.

A block divided: Does Fink stink?

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

A small group of Farmington Hills residents don't want to be called fink but at the moment they believe the rest of the world has little choice in the matter.

All of the persons in a funk over finks live on Fink Avenue east of Orchard Lake Road near Shiawassee.

And while they don't want to offend the Fink family after whom the street was named, they want the Farmington Hills City Council to authorize a change of address for them.

They've tired of out-of-town finks

making snide remarks about their address and have begun circulating a petition to change their street's name.

It's a switch which might be looked upon favorably by the post office and the city, according to Don Wolf, mayor of Farmington Hills.

Only one section of the street bears the name Fink. Other portions are known as Eldon and Canfield.

If the council approves the move, residents will be liable for the \$5 registration fee due the Oakland County Register of Deeds to cover paperwork as well as another charge to cover the costs of making and erecting new

street signs. The signs cost between \$18-20 each according to Wolf.

However, not everyone on the street wants to switch names. Another group of residents is circulating a counter-petition to preserve the name of Fink.

While their spokeswoman Susan McCormick declined to comment, she added, "Most of us have lived here for a long time. We can't see changing a street name just to change it."

But some residents say the present street name has negative connotations.

"Often people will make some snide remark about it," said Ellen Kolbus,

spokeswoman for those who'd like to change their street's name.

"The kids in school get teased about it," she added.

And she herself, is a little tired of hearing persons remark, "Oh what a strange name for a street."

If she decides to move, Mrs. Kolbus is concerned the street name will become a liability in selling their house.

And while her family purchased its home in spite of the street name, Mrs. Kolbus admits, she's always been irked

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Riegle sees agriculture, tourism key to economic plan

By TIM RICHARD

Michigan needs its own economic recovery plan, says U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle, to avoid becoming "permanently dependent on some kind of regional welfare."

The senior senator from the state hardest hit by the economic recession says Michigan should look to its agricultural and tourism resources as the starting points.

In an interview with four editors and reporters from Observer & Eccentric newspapers, Riegle said the state has been so dependent on the auto industry that "we don't have an okay way to pull ourselves back up by our bootstraps."

"I WOULD want the government to help us develop or augment our own natural economic strengths — locating solar energy production facilities on locating synthetic oil manufacturing and gasohol.

"Our agricultural base (for gasohol) in the state is a tremendous strength if we work to maximize it."

Riegle, a Democrat since he switched parties in 1973, scored the presidency of Gerald Ford, a Republican, for failing to boost Ford's home state of Michigan.

"If Jerry Ford, just one time, had

gone skiing in Michigan — one time — it would have done more to boost our tourism capabilities, which are also substantial. Put that down in the category of missed opportunities."

He recalled that in 1976 a Michigan consortium — including Bendix Corp. and the University of Michigan — put



U.S. SEN. DONALD RIEGLE

together a "Class A" proposal for a federally funded solar institute.

"It was one of the things Jerry Ford could have done for us in his last days as president, to send that to Michigan. Lyndon Johnson would have sent it to Texas, I assure you."

"I went to Colorado. Another piece (later) went to Minnesota, and I'm sure it was no coincidence," he said, referring to Vice President Walter Mondale, a former Minnesota senator.

THE REAGAN Administration and the chairs of the new U.S. Senate committees have western leadership, but Riegle hesitated to predict government policy would have a sharp westward thrust.

Hospital corrects error

In Monday's Farmington Observer, the sum of \$5,141,131 was incorrectly quoted as the price Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills paid to the Clarenceville School District for the acquisition of Edgewood Elementary School on St. Francis and Sedalia.

That figure quoted was the total cost of acquiring and renovating the school

Nearly all the questions and answers dealt with the Michigan economy.

"If everybody knew that 26 percent of all car production in the U.S. was in Michigan and the next highest state was Ohio with 9 percent, and then you consider the auto industry is at its lowest level in 19 years, and that there's 27 percent foreign penetration (into the auto market) — Michigan is in a unique situation that is not self-correcting."

"We're part of a regional problem. And in another sense, we're the most damaged and vulnerable state. So where we need to be part of regional strategies, we also need our own single state strategy, if you will, that others may not want to pay attention to because they're not in the same boat."

for use as an administrative facility by the hospital, according to Peg Reihmer, director of planning at Botsford General Hospital. It includes the cost of furnishing and energy-proofing the building.

The hospital paid \$1.2 million for the school and the 7.2 acres of land on which it is set.

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