

Farmington Observer

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Residents raise roof over proposed tax hike

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

If the more than 50 irritated residents who attended a public hearing Tuesday are any indication, Farmington Hills taxpayers see a proposed 1.26-mill increase in local taxes as a plague on their pocketbooks.

"I think you're significantly fortunate you don't have any demonstrations tonight," said Rich Moran, a Westbrooke subdivision resident, to a resounding round of applause from the angry taxpayers.

Moran asked City Council members to avoid raising taxes and instead make

cuts in the proposed \$14.3-million 1983-84 budget.

But city officials stressed that because the state equalized value (SEV) of property in Farmington Hills has dropped almost 1 percent (from almost \$950 million last year to a current \$942.8 million) revenue from local taxes would drop without a tax increase. That is coupled with a 5.7-percent anticipated increase in next year's expenditures.

So Farmington Hills officials are recommending an overall 1.2675 mills (per \$1,000 of assessed value) increase. That would hike the local tax rate approximately 16 percent from the cur-

'We are already overtaxed in this state. Let's run it (Farmington Hills) so taxpayers can afford it.'

— Harry Fox, resident

rent 7.8255 mills to 9.0930 in 1983-84. Since 1980 Farmington Hills' council has been authorized to raise local taxes up to the maximum 10 mills under city charter provisions. A vote of the electorate isn't required. The legislative body has yet to reach that limit.

"We are already overtaxed in this state as it is," said Harry Fox of Beantree, referring specifically to the recent 38-percent hike in state income tax. "Let's run it (city government) so taxpayers can afford it."

While city officials assured those at

the public hearing that they were trying hard to keep expenses down, one mill of the proposed tax increase would be designated specifically for capital improvements presented in a six-year capital improvements plan for Farmington Hills.

Within those suggested capital projects are necessary drain improvements, such as the Caddell Drain Project (Red Roof Inn area), officials said. The proposed tax increase also includes a .269-mill increase in the city's debt levy and a .2508-mill hike in the city's operating levy.

In 1983-84 city officials want to spend \$2.1 million on capital improve-

ments. But the proposed one-mill levy garners only \$942,000, so another \$1.2 million in reserves as well as \$40,000 in interest from city investments would be added to the pot.

"I think it's absolutely ridiculous with that kind of surplus to raise taxes," Fox said, indicating the surplus money should be used toward operating expenses so a tax hike could be avoided.

"It isn't as though we are just holding it in the banks," said Councilwoman Jody Soronen, indicating the surplus will be used for needed improvements.

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Understanding other cultures is celebrated

By Tom Beer
staff writer

Not knowing English should be no barrier to learning for students in the Farmington Public Schools.

Haroune Alameddine, who is Lebanese and speaks Arabic, coordinates a special bilingual program to help the district's non-English-speaking students.

Alameddine and his secretary, Sylvia Akouri, hosted a Bilingual-Bicultural Night last week at the Kenbrook Elementary School to explain the program to parents and relatives of the students.

The program, which uses bilingual aides to help the students in the classroom, serves 331 students from seven foreign countries.

"Students we help are usually bilingual or monolingual," Skouri said. "They move into our district from other countries. Often they don't know much English."

"Our aides go out into the schools to help them with their classes to bring them up to the level of the other students in that particular grade."

Akouri cited the case of Catia Cingolani, a recent arrival from Italy who now attends North Farmington High School. She lives with an uncle in Farmington Hills.

"She's monolingual... knows no English," Skouri said. "But in her

school in Italy, she's on a 10th-grade level. She knows most of her work in Italian but not in English. So we send an Italian bilingual aide into North Farmington for one, two or three periods, whatever she needs.

"They (the aides) will repeat the schoolwork in Italian and in English, hoping she'll pick up on it and stay on her same level."

THE DISTRICT hires aides where the greatest needs exist. The seven countries represented in the district are Taiwan, Korea, Albania, Italy, India, Japan and Lebanon.

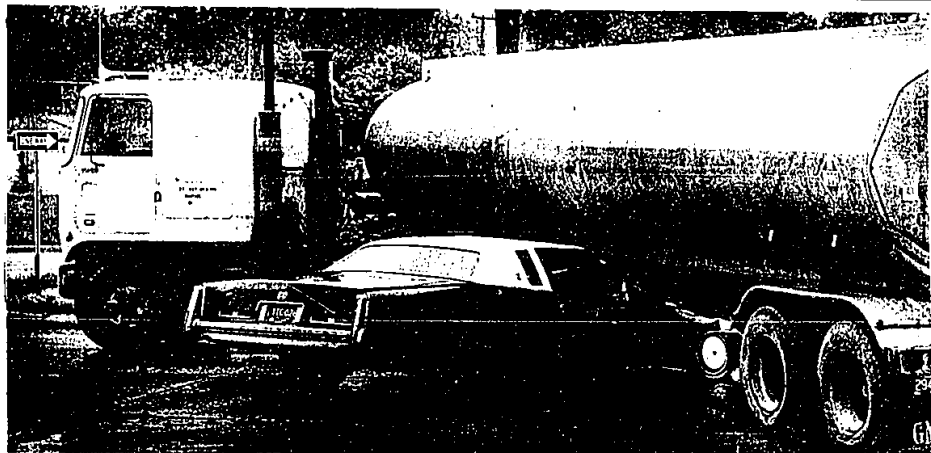
There are also aides who speak German, Farsi, Spanish and Chaldean. Students are eligible to take part in the program for three years.

"The aides have to be from that particular country and speak both languages fluently," Akouri said.

Last week's open house was attended by several members of the state board of education and representatives of Wayne State University's Department of Education as well as parents of the students.

"We want to show what each culture brings with it."

The open house featured an Indian fashion show and a potluck supper; the foods representing the various nationalities and cultures of the students involved.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

There was plenty for Farmington Hills police and firefighters to do after this Cadillac crashed into a gasoline tanker Tuesday. No serious injuries were reported.

No injuries reported

Auto rams tanker on Middlebelt

By Tom Beer
staff writer

A Farmington couple, recent immigrants from Romania who were driving to an English class over rain-slicked roads Tuesday morning, are "lucky to be alive," in the words of a man who saw their 1974 Cadillac ram a gasoline tanker truck on Middlebelt Road just north of Grand River.

Constantin Grigorean and his wife, Erzsébet, refused medical treatment after the accident, according to Farmington Hills police. No fire or explosion resulted from the crash.

But the accident ended with the Cadillac's entire front end lodged under the tanker, bringing a "three-station" response from the fire department and drawing large numbers of police officers.

Michael Currin of Detroit said he saw the accident while using a public telephone in a restaurant across Middlebelt.

"It hit so hard that it shook the inside of the restaurant," he said.

According to police, Grigorean's auto was traveling north on Middlebelt when it struck the empty tanker driven by Danny Kimmmerer of Pontiac.

Having just delivered 9,000 gallons of gasoline to the Addison station at Middlebelt and Grand River, Kimmmerer was turning his rig onto Middlebelt from the station.

GRIGOREAN SAID he had crossed the southbound lanes of Grand River on a green light and then crossed the northbound lanes on a yellow.

"I put on my brake when I saw the truck, but I was too near," said Grigorean, who estimated his speed at 30 mph.

Said a Farmington Hills police officer, "We're not sure about the lights. We're still investigating the case."

As a precaution, firefighters sprayed the wreckage with a chemical foam called Light Water, even though no leaking gasoline could be detected.

"There's always a danger," said Hills Fire Chief Larry Karon at the scene. "That's why we sprayed it. The foam seals the vapors and keeps them from escaping."

Added another firefighter, "It'd be a real problem if it (gasoline) were leaking, but it's not."

Karon said he was waiting for a representative of the state Fire Marshal's Office to arrive and advise how the auto and tanker would be separated.

"Any time you disengage them, you have that rubbing of metal parts and the danger of fire," Karon said.

Traffic on busy Grand River wasn't affected but police blocked the surrounding side streets.

C'ville adopts new budget

By Teri Banas
staff writer

The Clarenceville Board of Education adopted a \$5.97 million operating budget for the 1983-84 school year and set a tax levy of 40.4 mills (\$40.40 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation).

The millage levy is the same as this year's.

"It's almost all the way through a carry-over budget," said Edward J. Saliz, the district's assistant superintendent. The recently adopted budget was set at \$50,000 higher than the current year's budget.

With that, Saliz said the district is expecting to continue with some summer building improvements as well as

the purchase of a new school bus. But employee wage increases will have to take the back burner until the district's state aid allocation is announced next fall, he said.

"It's possible we'll have to call for a freeze on salaries. The only place there's any possibility of an income increase is in the state aid, because we've lost \$100,000-plus in local taxes."

The district's anticipated loss in its property tax collection resulted from a decline in its overall district property assessment from \$30 million to \$27 million this year. The district, which takes in parts of Livonia, Farmington Hills and Redford Township, is expected to lose some \$114,000 in locally-generated taxes this year. However, most of it is expected to be made up through increased state aid dollars, he said.

health continues to be the twice-a-year property tax collection, said Saliz. "It's been tremendous," he said. "Two years ago we borrowed \$1.5 million and paid \$140,000 in interest. That (\$140,000) is worth more than a mill which we were able to put into operations."

Other cost cuts have been derived from the purchase this year of a telephone system, expected to save \$10,000 a year, Saliz said.

Negotiations between the school board and employees' unions continue. Clarenceville, due to continued fiscal uncertainty, negotiates the economic package of workers' contracts annually.

Negotiations with the 102-member teachers' union is expected to start next week. This year, the teachers received a 1.97 percent pay increase.

A BIG boost to the district's fiscal



Photo by TOM MANDELKA

Valsah Shah models an Indian bride gown.

oral quarrel

What is your feeling on Hills tax increase?

Farmington Hills City Council is contemplating a tax increase which is to be combined with a budget surplus to pay for city services and capital improvements. Several persons showed up at this week's council session to object to the increase.

Council is allowed under the rules of the city charter to tax up to 10 mills without a vote of the people.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL RAISING TAXES? WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE CITY SERVICES CUT OR TAXES RAISED?

To answer this question, call us at 477-6498. You will have 30 seconds to respond. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer to see how your neighbors feel about this issue.

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Home is robbed, jewelry stolen

Almost \$21,000 in jewelry was taken May 30 in the breaking and entering of a Farmington Hills residence.

Garyon Zeltzer of Fox Run called police about 2 p.m. after returning home and finding a rear window of his home broken out. About \$50 in damage was caused to the window, which was broken just enough for someone to reach in, open the window latches and slide open the window.

Although Zeltzer's home has a burglar alarm it was deactivated at the time of the breaking and entering.

The jewelry was taken from jewelry boxes located on a dresser in a master bedroom, according to police. Several bottles of liquor and a pen set also were taken.

Police have no suspects.