

Campaigns enter homestretch

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RUNNING FOR one, non-partisan four-year term on the school board.

Incumbent Susan Renzels, 47, an assistant vice president and branch manager for the First Federal of Michigan office in Farmington Hills, who is seeking her third term on the board. A southeaster Farmington Hills resident, she has lived in the district for 19 years and has two children who graduated from the system. The main thrust of her campaign has been encouraging increased community involvement and innovative programs for students and educating the public about the changing financial status of the district.

Ford Motor Co. engineer Richard DeVries, 41, a westside Farmington Hills resident who is making his second run at a board seat. He is married and has two sons in elementary schools in the district, and a preschool-age daughter at home. He has lived in the district for 11 non-consecutive years. DeVries is focusing on goal-setting and budget-cutting for the district and wants to see better measures of student assessment.

PTA and community activist Laura Myers, 39, who is also running for the board for a second time and placed a close third to the two

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at four precincts, and absentee voters can cast ballots during regular business hours weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center.

winners last year. A nine-year resident of downtown Farmington's Old Village historic district, Myers is married and has three sons in school in the district. She is focusing on parental involvement and creating an environment in which the public will feel welcome in the schools.

DURING THEIR campaigns, all three candidates said they concentrate on concerns over taxes, district finances and community involvement in the schools. All three pledged to push for cablecasting of school board meetings.

There is an issue out there, and that's accountability to the parents," DeVries said. "Many people don't feel they're being listened to as parents. They don't understand what's going on in the classroom. There has to be better communication of the curriculum." DeVries said he main-

tains a strong platform against tax increases and teacher layoffs, and believes much can be done with the money on hand.

If elected, DeVries said, he would seek to assure no programs would be changed in the fall, and to start a planning process to set better goals for the district. He said he would also make himself available with regular office hours to meet with the public.

Myers said that during her door-to-door efforts she heard concern over "how the money is spent" but not necessarily about increased taxes. And people are still concerned with the attitude of the school board and school administration," she added. "There is still the perception... that the school administration doesn't care."

If elected, Myers said, she would immediately work to improve that

perception. "I have a lot of respect for them (board members), but they've become a closed camp," she said. "I just want to open them to new ideas."

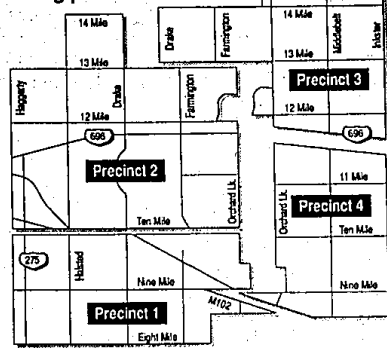
Both Myers and DeVries agreed the board needs to be open to all voices, including those critical of the district.

If she is re-elected, Renzels said, she wants to immediately begin a systematic review of all school departments and programs — involving the community — to decide what is working and what is not. She would strongly urge the involvement of non-parents, who make up a majority of taxpayers, she said. Also, she said, the district's newsletter needs to offer more information residents can use.

With money being taken by the state "we are going to have to continue to cut — things are never going to be the same for a district like us," she said. "How do we adjust to reality and still keep a quality system?"

The Farmington Public Schools encompasses all of the city of Farmington, most of Farmington Hills and a small portion of southeastern West Bloomfield Township. The school board is comprised of seven elected members who live in the district and serve staggered four-year terms.

Farmington Public Schools voting precincts



- Precinct 1: Farmington Training Center, 32000 Thomas Road
- Precinct 2: Dunckel Middle School, 32800 12 Mile Road
- Precinct 3: Warner Middle School, 30303 W. 14 Mile Road
- Precinct 4: East Middle School, 25000 Middlebelt

TAMU GRAVE/Observer & Eccentric

Hills looks to keep its promise on parks

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was not developed. Yockey's reminder was about the council's promise to have an ad hoc committee form plans for the controversial Peltz-MDOT property west of Farmington Road, south of I-696, as well as for youth sports parks.

In fact, city manager William Costick proposed the creation of two ad hoc committees Monday. He threw out a few names of people who might serve on the committees, including council members, naturalists and youth sports leaders.

"The issues — especially Peltz-MDOT — are broader than just parks and recreation," Costick said. He added the idea for the committees was to get people involved and to serve in an advisory capacity.

BUT YOCKEY took a stand when he heard talk of advisory. "Is that what I'm hearing?" Yockey asked.

Immediately, mayor Aida Vagorz, asked Costick to study the resolution the council adopted April 8. That resolution, in part, says: "... if the millage is approved it would be the intent of the city council to appoint a special ad hoc committee to draw up a master plan for Peltz-MDOT properties and youth active sports parks yet to be acquired."

That's what Yockey was talking about Monday. He said the reason for allowing the committees to plan the parks is because "bureaucracy has been counterproductive."

Costick read a list of potential committee members, including Quaker Valley resident Mark Davis, naturalist Joe Derek and vocal resident Roy Lindhardt, as well as

others about the politics in this city," Sever said. "We can already look at these committees and know what we're going to get."

Vagorz said more people can be added to the committees. "I kind of like having people on these committees who have been the movers."

Dennis Fitzgerald, parks and recreation commission chairman, on the other hand, suggested a good mix of interests on the committees. He suggested someone interested in family recreation on both committees, senior adults, business representatives as well as a naturalist on the athletics committee. "We want to keep everyone marching along together," he said.

Fitzgerald also suggested that someone from the Farmington Community Library serve on the Peltz-MDOT committee because a portion

of the Peltz property has been reserved for a new, larger library if voters approve construction and financing in the future.

"To include them (library officials) might be a slap in the face — if not dumb on our part," Fitzgerald said. In late June or early July, Costick is expected to provide the council with a list of names for the committees. In the proposed special millage budget, \$15,000 has been allocated for preliminary designs for both the Peltz-MDOT property and the youth athletic park, which is expected to be on the old sod farm on Eight Mile that the city is attempting to buy.

Work at Peltz-MDOT will be limited to development of access roads, limited parking, natural trails and small picnic areas, according to an April city council resolution.

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