

IN THE PAPER
TODAY

Voters have 'renewed' spirit



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington school officials are smiling now that voters have approved by a whopping 4-to-1 margin a millage renewal worth about \$31 million. Only 10 percent of the district's voters went to the polls.

4,398 yes; 1,237 no.

The mills renewed will account for \$31.1 million, or one-third of the schools' operating budget. School officials say the money will help accomplish the district's three-year goals.

"I woke up this morning and thought, 'I'm really proud to work in this community,'" said Superintendent Michael Flanagan. "That is the

largest margin — 4-to-1 — we've ever had vote yes. This is in a time of tax assessment talk, legislative rhetoric . . . The public still came through."

Neither the result nor the turnout is a surprise. School officials — Flanagan in particular — corralled support from civic and business leaders, as well as past critics of millage proposals. Endorsements rained from the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, city council, State Rep. Jan Dolan to Handlee Amendment expert and economist Patrick Anderson. For the first time, the board held a

cable call-in show to answer questions. Opposition to the renewal was stifled.

Flanagan credited parents and staff for getting out information. He also noted an appropriate contract settlement with the district's employees helped sway voters' minds.

He said another key was getting support from some of the 90 percent of the people in the district who don't have children in Farmington Public Schools.

See VOTE, 4A



Duly sworn: Frank Lauhoff, Farmington's new city manager, had plenty of happy onlookers as he took the oath of office Monday evening./3A

Local history: Lee S. Peel, local historian and former high school journalism teacher, has updated his book, "Farmington: A Pictorial History."/13A

COUNTY NEWS

Just do it: Oakland County's new public services director is a former sports agent, a former Marine and a real funny guy./5A

Do it again: Circuit judges OK'd Prosecutor Richard Thompson's fourth grand jury in four years to investigate murders and drug trafficking cases./20A

OPINION

School fights: People should be concerned about the fights between students reported in the Farmington schools. But there should be perspective./18A

INDEX

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Building Scene . . . 1F | Crossword . . . 2E |
| Business . . . 10-11B | Entertainment . . . 6-8B |
| Classifieds . . . E-G | Obituaries . . . 17A |
| Auto G | Opinion . . . 18A |
| Employment . . . FG | Police, fire calls . . . 6A |
| Real estate . . . EF | Personal scene . . . 5G |
| Creative Living . . . 1D | |

Leader 'du jour'



Well conducted: Karen Nixon of Farmington Hills is all smiles as she prepares to conduct Group du jour in Sunday's concert.

Woman guides orchestra

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

If you didn't know her, you would sooner picture Karen Nixon cheering for the home team at a basketball game than conducting an orchestra.

But, to her surprise as much as anyone's, the Farmington Hills resident has emerged from her shell as an introverted classical horn player into an outgoing conductor, music director and promoter of Group du jour, the symphony orchestra based in Farmington Hills.

"I've had people who haven't seen me in a while tell me they didn't even recognize me now," said the French horn virtuoso. "After all, the competition is tough. You have to spend a lot of time practicing, which doesn't leave much time

for a social life."

Surrounded by a room full of instruments, including a grand piano, sheet music and notes, and with Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" playing on the stereo, Nixon is working feverishly to make sure everything goes well at Group du jour's performance of "Winter Fantasies" Sunday, Feb. 7, at 7:30 p.m. at Dublin Hall in the Mercy Center, 11 Mile and Middlebelt.

Much variety

The program will range from classical favorites like "Romeo and Juliet" to the Broadway tunes of "South Pacific" to Disney's popular "The Little Mermaid."

There is reason for such variety, Nixon, who has bachelor's and

master's degrees from the University of Michigan, said a vast potential audience would support classical music, but has stayed away from what can sometimes seem like a stuffy medium.

"A large segment of the population has been lost to classical music," said the affable musician. "You look out over the audience and it's a sea of gray heads. We need people in their 30s. That's why we're playing things like 'The Little Mermaid.' These people have kids."

Not only would people recognize and enjoy classical music once they heard it, many talented classically trained musicians have applied

See ORCHESTRA, 2A

Revised plaza gets OK

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

After a few adjustments, the Downtown Clock Plaza is on for Farmington.

The Downtown Development Authority Board reaffirmed its backing of a renovation plan, which includes building a 28-foot brick clock tower on the northwest corner of Shiawassee and Grand River.

Some residents oppose the idea, saying a clock tower would detract from the historic Masonic Temple building.

They contend the 1876 landmark is already the focal point of downtown. "That corner doesn't need embellishment," Farmington resident Nancy Leonard told the DDA Board Tuesday. "It's fine as it is."

The DDA proceeded to give city architect Chris Wzacy the OK to draw up a detailed plan for the Downtown Clock Plaza.

The Masonic Board, which owns the land, has already given its approval. The project will also go before the historical commission and planning commission for review.

Tuesday's meeting offered a prime chance to raise concerns. Few did.

"I just wish we could landscape the corner in a way to enhance the building," said Betty Borgman. "To me, that's (the clock) just more clutter."

Wzacy presented an artist rendering of the proposed plan. Renovations would also include additional trees, a three- by six-foot sign and easier pedestrian access.

The clock tower's height has been a sticking point. Initial plans called for a tower standing 34 feet.

Wzacy amended that to 28 feet.

The Masonic Board asked for the change. Members wanted the clock tower to be brought in line with the lower line of the building's mansard roof.

See PLAZA, 4A

Longtime principal to retire

After 39 years, Harrison High School Principal Clayton Graham has decided to retire.

The longtime educator's last school day will be in June. Graham, 64, said he wants to spend more time with his family.

"I still look forward coming to work each day," Graham said. "I'm not retiring because I dislike the work. . . I still enjoy being around the kids."

Graham told his staff last week he was stepping down. He informed Su-

perintendent Michael Flanagan of his decision two weeks ago.

Graham started in the Farmington Public Schools in 1955 as a business teacher. He's been principal of all three public high schools in the Farmington district.

Graham first served as North Farmington's principal from 1967-73. He then served three years at Farmington High before returning to North in 1976.

He became Harrison's principal in 1985.

At North Farmington, Graham became involved in a controversy over the role religious groups such as Campus Life should play in the lives of public school students.

A policy was later adopted declaring that schools must be "wholly neutral" in dealing with religious beliefs.

In retiring, Graham said he'll miss the students the most. The decision is something he'd been considering for some time. . . I've been at it for a while," he said.



Clayton Graham

A taxing situation

Jim Husband and Donald Criss, local certified public accountants, will provide updates on changes in the income tax codes during the Tuesday, Feb. 9 session of the Winter Investment Series.

Their presentation begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Farmington Hills Branch Library on 12 Mile Road between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads. They will answer questions after the talk.

There is no charge, but reservations are necessary. Call 653-0300.

Evenings at sea

"An Enchanting Evening at Sea" will be the theme of the 14th annual Mercy High School auc-

FARMINGTON FOCUS

tion at 7 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Feb. 19-20, at the school, 11 Mile and Middlebelt roads, Farmington Hills.

Proceeds from the parent-sponsored auction subsidize tuition at the all-girl Catholic high school, said Jo Monaghan of the school Development Office, and the group seeks to raise "\$85,000 plus."

Activities will include dinners and auctions both nights. Some items to be auctioned on Saturday night are a Motown Museum Getaway Tour and a luxury cruise.

For more information and to make reservations,

call Monaghan at 476-8922.

Memory Lane

From the Feb. 5, 1953 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

■ The state Highway Department authorized a traffic signal for the intersection of Grand River and Middlebelt Road.

■ Additional taxes received by the Farmington Township School District has eased the financial situation somewhat, said Superintendent O.E. Dunckel. Some \$40,876 came from the state, including \$24,655 in state aid.

■ Clothing was left at the Farmington Detroit Edison office for victims of flooding in Holland. It was taken to the Dutch Relief Center in Detroit for shipment overseas.

HERE'S HOW TO REACH US

- Newroom: 477-5450
Newroom Fax: 477-8722
Sports: 953-2141
Reader Comment Line: 953-2042
Classified Advertising: 591-0900
Display Advertising: 591-2300
Home Delivery: 591-0500
Cable/TV Weekly: 478-5160

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers offer an exciting new electronic bulletin board program. ON-LINE allows these with personal computers to engage in Multi-user Chats and Chat Conferences, with personal chatbots, call up community download programs, call up community calendars, check out electronic magazines, respond to newspaper stories and editorials and receive a reply. A start-up software package is available for \$5.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Call 953-2266