

# City faces off with state pirates in budget duel

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Lansing's bureaucratic bureaucrats have boarded the city of Farmington's ship of fiscal responsibility, wreaking havoc with its swashbuckling slashes at revenue sharing and caps on property assessments.

Fear not, Captain and City Manager Frank Laubhoff and deckhands are keeping the pirates at bay. Waller wounds to passengers — namely taxpayers — appear to be minimal in this year's proposed \$5.2 million budget.

The 1995-96 budget calls for a

2-percent increase in spending. As a result, taxpayers will see a 10-mile increase in operating millage (from 10.29 to 10.39), which is partly offset by a .07 reduction (3.61 to 3.54) in debt service.

A public hearing on the budget will take place at 8 p.m. Monday, June 5, at Farmington City Hall.

A voter-approved road repair tax of 1.6 mills will put the total to 15.54 mills but the total to 15.54 mills will put the total to 15.54 mills of taxable property value, which is up to half the property's market value.

A person with a \$100,000 home will pay an additional \$81.50 a

year in city taxes.

In the future, I think we'll see those numbers more closely related to inflation," City Manager Frank Laubhoff said. "We've tried up our areas of consolidation and creative ways to reduce costs. We've just run out."

Inflation is around 3 percent, but increased revenue from property taxes is 1.75 percent. Farmington will lose an estimated \$2 million in SEV growth because of assessment caps brought on by Proposal A, officials said.

That hurts. City officials are also girding themselves for a 6-

percent decrease from expected state shared revenue.

Under a state formula, Farmington should receive 11 percent. The city will likely see 4.7 to 5 percent instead, Laubhoff said. State shared money accounts for 18 percent of the city's incoming revenues.

Maintaining services was the battle cry throughout the budget process.

Increases in spending — with the exception of salaries — were kept to 1 percent. Salaries and benefits — which account for \$2.9 million of the total expenditures

— were curbed at 3 percent.

Farmington public safety officers received a 4-percent increase as part of their arbitration award. Public safety will cost \$1.6 million (31 percent of total expenditures); city hall and district court runs \$1.1 million; and public services cost \$37,248 in 1995-96.

Expenditures will exceed revenue by \$80,000. Money will be taken from the city's fund balance to make up the difference.

The city will pay \$883,419 for insurance and health benefits. Also, included in the \$5.2 million operating budget is \$245,000 for

the library, \$97,710 for community development, and \$18,700 in social services.

The city made strides in keeping health care costs down.

Increasing copays on prescriptions and offering cash incentives to employees not to take the city's health insurance helped limit these costs to only a 1.5-percent increase last year, Laubhoff said. Health care costs rose 75 percent between 1988 and 1993.

With the increase in operating millage, Farmington still ranks in the lower tier in taxes compared to other Oakland County cities.

## Tupper from page 1A

One reason for running again was to help with the transition to a new city manager, Tupper said. Frank Laubhoff succeeded long-term City Manager Bob Deadman in 1993.

Tupper's historical frame of reference has been particularly helpful, Laubhoff said.

"I know he's been talking about it," Laubhoff said. "Mr. Tupper, if he doesn't run, he'll be sorely missed."

Hartsock has served with Tupper all 21 years. Tupper's first hour was when he and the rest of council conducted a public hearing on a senior housing development in the late 1970s, Hartsock said.

Public turnout was so overwhelming the hearing had to be adjourned in council chambers and moved to the Farmington High Auditorium.

"I could see someone bending to that, but our council was united," Hartsock said.

Tupper's knowledge of ordinances and building codes is an often-tapped resource, Hartsock said.

Those who came before council asking for variances, though, were not always treated gently by the councilman. He's been known to be brief.

"Because of his compassion for the city, he does not always realize how he comes across sometimes," Hartsock said. "It's nothing malicious . . ."

Tupper is unapologetic for his steadfast adherence to ordinances. Said the councilman: "If council doesn't do that, we're not doing our job. If ordinances are not being enforced, they shouldn't be on the books."

Civic pride is behind most of his push, Tupper said. He's proud of the way downtown has rebounded but adds more work needs to be done.

His commitment has been seen outside city affairs. Tupper has been a driving force behind the annual Farmington Area Goodfellows drive and was one of the founders of Neighborhood House.

He'll continue to work on those two causes.

"I'll have plenty of things to do," Tupper said.

## Enberg from page 1A

flation, she adds.

However, the board going to the voters for enhancement mills is the last thing I'd do," Enberg said.

With all these district ties, Enberg contends she can still bring an outsider's perspective.

"Just because I've served on school committees doesn't mean I wholeheartedly agree with every single thing that has been done," she said. "I still have my opinions . . . I think I can maintain an objective view."

A critic she is not.

"I've been pleased with the district," said Enberg, whose sons Michael and Shaun have attended Eagle and Longacre elementary, Power Middle School, and Farmington High. "The district has served our needs very well. I see a lot of strengths in this district."

One area of concern is student writing skills. Enberg questions whether the focus has been more on creativity rather than mechanics.

She notes the district is re-evaluating its writing curriculum, which makes her happy.

"I would hope they would take a look at how grammar is presented in the school system," Enberg said. "I have no other big issues. I think they've done a lot of things right."

Enberg and her family have lived in the Farmington area 11 years, including the last eight on Whittaker in Farmington. Her husband, Robert, is an allergist on the staff of Henry Ford Health System.



Busy candidate: Linda Enberg (left), president of Farmington Families in Action and a candidate for the Farmington Board of Education, counts red ribbons with Terry Klenczar, co-president in training.

Enberg has a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Kansas and a master's of business from the University of Michigan. She worked as a pediatric

nurse and later as a consultant. She left the workforce in 1992 to concentrate fully on volunteering. Farmington is reminiscent of Illinois, the town she's from in

Illinois. She loves to travel, especially on camping trips. For stress management, she sings in the Orchard United Methodist Church choir.

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### Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-640)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric's Publications, 805 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48329-0910. Second class postage paid at Farmington, MI 48329-0910. Postmaster: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric's, 805 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48329-0910. Telephone 644-1100.

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