

Jubilation sounds as millage approved

By RON GARRINSKI

Voters overwhelmingly approved renewal of four mills operating revenues for Farmington schools in the district second largest election turnout in history. Of the 1,228 votes cast in Tuesday's special millage renewal election, 71 per cent, or 874 residents, favored the four-mill renewal.

Only 214 voters opposed the millage which will provide the district with \$19 million in revenues each year for the next decade.

"I'm delighted by the fact that the Farmington community shows a good will that is inherently expressed in their support of our schools," Farmington Sgt. Marinus Van Ameyde said at Tuesday's school board meeting after learning of passage of the renewal.

This support is unique and outstanding if we compare it to that of other communities around our district that have voted against their millages.

"OUR MARGIN of victory shows that compared to other communities, our community really cares about the quality of education in our district," he continued. "And I'm proud of the fact that our community is so supporting."

Passage of the four-mill renewal will mean that the district now is in a much better position to handle expenses for the coming school year.

"It's a tremendous relief to know now that the district will try to consider a budget of where he will be operating at a deficit of only about \$13 million instead of the possible \$3 million we would have had if the millage failed," Business Manager William Frank said.

"We still have a considerable amount of budget work for next year, but passage of the millage means that the district won't have to make the cuts it would have if the millage wasn't approved," Frank continued.

A halved budget for the district is still a long way off and at this time we don't have any idea what the district's final budget will be, but the good thing about passage of the millage is that we now will have that \$19 million to operate with," he said.

School officials expressed satisfaction with Tuesday's voter turnout, saying that the people of the Farmington community are concerned about the educational programs in the district.

While Tuesday's election recorded 7289 votes, it is only about a quarter of the Farmington area's more than 22,500 registered voters.

"Voter turnout was the second best it has ever been in the district," Van Ameyde said. "Even though it is smaller than last April's record turnout, it is a good indication that the community cares about its boys and girls."

School board members reacted to the millage renewal with optimism, saying that passage of the four mills now means that the district will not have to lay off extra teachers or make further cuts in educational programs.

Before passage of the four-mill renewal the school district was anticipating the layoffs of an additional 147 teachers.

While the millage passed, the school board approved the laying off of 85 teachers due to necessary cuts in the budget.

Trustee Emma Makinen was quick to agree. "The fantastic turnout indicates the support of our schools from people who are really involved in what goes on in the district."

To help work around the district's anticipated \$13 million deficit.

Another 20 teachers will be terminated due to reductions in school enrollments and 10 others will be lost through retirement or attrition.

"MY FIRST reaction to passage of the millage is one of relief. It now means that we won't have to lay off more teachers and the district will be able to salvage its educational programs," board Trustee Anne Struble said.

It is extremely satisfying to me that there was such a large turnout for the election. It is an indication of the interest in our schools and that is really significant to me," she continued.

That says to me as a school board member that the community wants to preserve as much of the district's educational programs as possible," Mrs. Struble said.

Trustee Emma Makinen was quick to agree. "The fantastic turnout indicates the support of our schools from people who are really involved in what goes on in the district."

Those who voted are aware of what is needed and the way they voted reflects it," Mrs. Makinen expressed.

The community understands that we don't ask for things we don't need. Just getting 7,000 plus people out to vote indicates a community awareness of school needs and I think residents have a real appreciation of our schools.

I think the district is able to gain some relief as a result of the community's overwhelming support," Trustee Dr. Mervyn Ross said.

The community has an opportunity to become informed of the facts at school districts are facing today. They responded in the best way possible by approving the millage renewal," Dr. Ross continued.

"THE DISTRICT has estimated the needs honestly and they responded honestly," he said. "The community has saved the district from total emasculation."

Results from the district's four precincts show that the renewal passed by more than a 2-1 margin.

Ballots cast in Precinct 2, the largest in the district located at Dunckel Junior High revealed 1,737 yes votes and only 668 no.

At Farmington Junior High the results were 1,292 to 599 in favor of the millage.

Precinct 1 at Middlebell Elementary reported 1,206 yes and 582 opposition votes.

Eagle Elementary the smallest precinct in the district closed with 664 votes in favor of the millage and 558 residents opposing the four-mill renewal.

This is a clear indication that the community wants to support the schools. It is interesting to note that across the board the voting percentages are about the same," said Bud Pickett, chairman of Kids Count in Farmington, a committee working for approval of the millage.

It was a super effort that was the community's effort to see them come through for the district especially during tough times like we are now experiencing," he explained.

"WHAT PLEASES me most is that I will be able to step down as superintendent and leave the district in a fairly good position," concluded Van Ameyde.

Even though we have a lot of budget work before us, I am delighted that my successor will be able to come into the situation where most union contracts are not scheduled to expire for several years."

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Election workers pondered the situation early on Thursday morning as they waited for voters to arrive at the polls. More than 5,000 of the voters who did turn out voted to approve the four-mill renewal. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Dedicated workers aid in election

April 6 was a long, trying day for at least 31 Farmington area residents. For most, their day began about 3 a. m. From then on, they started to record the events that made Tuesday significant for the Farmington School District.

These 31 residents were precinct workers in Tuesday's special millage election.

These workers really know how to handle elections. They are a great group of people and some of them have more than 20 years of experience and expertise in school elections," said Michael Flanagan, the district's manager of administrative and student services.

"There is a broad cross section of workers and they can handle any problem that arises. All we as administrators do is take care of the mechanical problems that might occur with the voting machines," said Flanagan, who directs the district's work force.

In a precinct in the district, there were 10 election volunteers.

At Middlebell Elementary and Farmington Junior High, there were nine workers each.

"The number of election workers is always subject to criticism. Last April when we had one of our greatest voter turnouts ever the lines were slow because we didn't have enough election workers," Flanagan explained.

"Other times, residents feel we have had too many workers. What we have to remember is that we need just enough workers to handle the voter loads during the peak periods early in the morning and later in the afternoon," he continued.

"THIS YEAR, we feel we had the right number of workers to man the precincts. Everything was working smoothly and the workers were handling the voters in stride without any difficulty."

At the polls, election workers are responsible for several important record-keeping duties.

Applications to vote must be signed and checked against voter registration books. Each of these steps must be handled by a certified election worker.

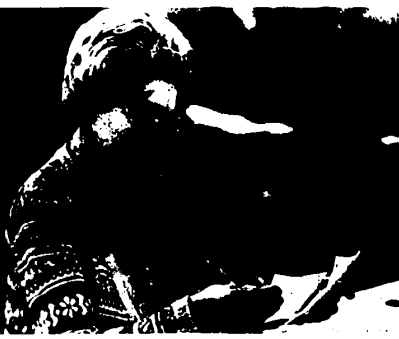
The next step is to make certain there is a smooth flow of voters using the machines, so another worker is stationed near the machines to keep lines moving.

Each precinct is supervised by an election chairperson who also assures workers lunch, dinner and rest breaks during their 15-hour day.

"It's really hectic," most election workers say.

"By two in the afternoon, we're ready to take a nap," others add.

But the important thing for us is to (Continued on page 11)



Sandy Darvin, a precinct worker at Middle Bell Elementary School during this week's millage election, keeps track of the action which led to victory for the renewal. (Staff photo)

Fire chief vows solidarity as leader of Hills volunteers

By RON GARRINSKI

A challenger lured John Van De Voort to Farmington Hills.

When he interviewed for his new position as Hills fire chief, he was an outsider looking in and saw a situation where everyone was alienated from everyone else—volun-

teer firemen, policemen, city council members, administrators and the community.

"But now that I'm chief of the fire department, I can go on what happened in the department in the past," Van De Voort says.

"I have to get a handle and perspective on the problems within the department. Then I have to get everyone working on the same track for the good of fire services in the community," he said.

"Trying to reach the goal presented the fire chief with another challenge in his 41-year fire training and management career."

"Part of the problem experienced by the department in the past already is beginning to change," he explains. "I am part of the fire family, and the men have accepted me as chief because of my experience."

"THE DEPARTMENT now has its fire-orientated spokesman and I hope to win the confidence of the men so we can improve the quality of services we provide," Van DeVoort continues.

"In order to improve services offered by the department, he says, the community must be willing to provide the funds for those services."

"I went before the city council when I was hired for the job and asked the council what they wanted in a fire department."

"But I also told them that improving the quality of fire services in Farmington Hills will cost money. What the future of fire services will be depends on what the community wants to spend."

"Money plays the most important role in the level of services the department can provide. I would like to see the department improve from its present state to a medium level of services," the chief says.

"Reaching that level is going to take a lot of money. But I don't really know what I'm dealing with here in Farmington Hills because I don't even know if the community wants us to provide the city that kind of service."

Van DeVoort views his job as identifying needs of the department and trying to find ways to meet those needs.

He says there are several needs that haven't been taken care of in the past. He is quick to point out that no one person is at fault for letting those needs go unrecognized.

"NOBODY IS really at fault when I say the needs of this department are not taken care of," the chief explains. "The system is at fault because in the past, there wasn't anyone to follow through on the

needs and make sure they were recognized."

Now that the department has one chief, I think many of those problems will soon be taken care of," he says.

To meet present fire needs the new chief has several plans which will help improve the system.

The method is to standardize everything the four fire stations do and use at the scene of a fire. To do the Van DeVoort with the participation of the four fire fighting units is develop basic operational plans.

This way, he says, everyone in the de-

partment will know what everyone else is doing and all the volunteers will know what to do.

Another plan is the development of a standardized reporting system for administrative reports. The department now will begin compiling a reference book that contains samples of all forms and reports the department uses so that all future reports will be uniform.

Van DeVoort also is forming a committee on rules and regulations.

Guidelines will be presented to the chiefs.

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Water rate increase looms for City of Farmington

City of Farmington residents will be paying more for their water.

The city council has voted to boost the rates as a result of the 39 per cent rate increase by the Detroit Metro Water System. The Oakland County Department of Public Works supplies water to certain portions of the City of Farmington. Water from this system is purchased from Detroit.

Flante & Moran say this is the average water loss in that type of system.

DEADMAN URGED the council to approve the increase even though the Detroit board's increase is being litigated in the courts by surrounding suburban communities.

"Bills paid to Detroit in the interim period will be paid with a formal protest until such time as the lawsuit is settled. If the suburban communities are successful in re-

ducing the water rate, the ordinance (establishing the rate increase) will have to be adjusted accordingly," he said.

Until the litigation is settled, said Deadman, the city should adjust the water rates to compensate for the additional charges by Oakland County and Detroit.

"But we've got to change now in case the suburban communities lose the litigation. If we didn't charge and lost the case, I don't know where we would get the money."

RESIDENTS WILL PAY 18 per cent more for the first 7,000 gallons, and approximately 31 per cent thereafter. The minimum quarterly water bill will increase from \$5.35 to \$8.30 for the first 7,000 gallons.

Presently, the city charges 41 cents per thousand gallons for the next 10,000 gallons over the minimum and 39 cents per thousand gallons thereafter. This rate would be changed to 54 cents per thousand gallons for all water used over the minimum billing, said City Manager Job Deadman.

Besides the 39 per cent increase, the county will pass on an additional 14 cent per thousand cubic feet cost.

"Oakland County states that the additional increase is needed because of the increased expenses of the system," said Deadman.

Before making its recommendation to city council, the administration sought the opinion of the Flante & Moran auditing firm. It has made similar studies in other surrounding suburban communities.

"These recommendations are based on the assumption that the system's water purchases from Detroit will increase approximately 75 per cent over the next three years," said Deadman. Also computed into the calculations was a 10 per cent water-loss figure reflective from

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Welcome spring with "Fashion in perspective" included in today's paper.



Newly hired Farmington Hills Fire Chief John Van DeVoort stands beside one of the rigs utilized by the city's fire department. He has vowed to bring harmony to the controversial volunteer force. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)