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Twenty Five Cents

June 14 election

Voters face millage increase decision

By RON GARBINSKI

Farmington area voters will be faced with a 2.4 mill increase proposal in the June 14 school election.

By a 4-3 vote, the school board decided Tuesday night to put before voters the millage increase proposal that would raise \$1.1 million for operating revenue each year for five years.

Before voting on this proposal, the board defeated a motion that would have leveled 2.4 mills for only two years.

Trustees Gary Lichtman, William Gravis and Michael Spiece opposed the five-year millage increase proposal.

"I don't think there is any question that the board must consider extra millage to maintain programs next year at the same level as this year," Trustee Dr. Mervyn Ross said.

Before the closing of Farmington Junior High School, the district's anticipated deficit was estimated at \$1.3 million. With teacher layoffs, unemployment compensation would increase that figure by \$200,000 to approximately \$1.6 million.

"When talking about continuing programs at the same levels next year, we need 2.8 mills," said District Business Manager William Prisk.

"THAT WOULD BE an additional \$1.3 million generated by millage to balance the budget or \$1.6-1.7 million to balance the budget through reductions. That \$1.6 million would include the unemployment compensation benefits we would have to pay out," Prisk continued.

"But since the closing of Farmington Junior High School will save the district about \$200,000 next year, the budget deficit that we anticipate will be reduced to \$1.1 million."

"So this reduction in the deficit would mean that the district only would need 2.4 mills to maintain the same programs next year," Prisk explained.

While the board split on the decision to levy a 2.4 mill increase for five years, trustees argued about the timing of the proposal.

"I don't think we are prepared to make a decision at this time," Spiece said.

"There are a lot of cuts in the budget I would make even if we were raising money. The way I see it, there is a lot of waste and a lot of things we don't need."

"Before going to the community for additional millage, let's look at the budget and make cuts in other areas first," Spiece continued.

"I just think it is unfair to raise taxes in a time when so many people are experiencing financial difficulties. Let's take a hard look at the present budget first to see where we can make cuts and then consider if we need to levy additional millage," he added.

Trustee Lichtman agreed with Spiece in that the board should first look at the district's budget before asking residents to "reach into their pockets again."

"I'm concerned about the board's action because it hasn't looked at all the options it can take in this matter without first looking at the budget," Lichtman said.

"My point is that last year at this time, we had some idea what our options were. Now we're one month away from the election and we haven't even looked at the budget."

"And that's irresponsible," Lichtman declared.

"I think we should first look at the options. Set our priorities and then face up to our responsibilities as board members."

"When you are looking at 2.4 total mills and want to make it 2.8 mills by increasing the millage, you're talking about big dollars," Lichtman said. "Let's review our budget before doing anything about increasing the millage."

As Spiece, Lichtman and Gravis opposed the millage increase for five years, the other board members debated whether to increase the millage even further if necessary.

"We have no facts that tell us to go for more than 2.4 mills. Who knows, maybe next year we'll look back and say we should have gone four mills," Ross said.

"But we should base the millage increase on what's educationally sound and

not what is fiscally sound," he pointed out.

TRUSTEE GRAVIS voted against the five-year proposal, but he was a staunch supporter of the two-year provision.

"I'm a strong supporter of additional millage. But I'm in favor of as low a millage increase as possible for as short a time as possible," Gravis said.

"We need to find out what the state is doing. Because of the recession in Lansing, maybe we should nickel and dime our way through this until we know what is going on in the Capitol."

"Lawmakers say they have no big plans for the future. They are just trying to get through this year. Maybe that's what we should do," he continued.

Because of this, Gravis said he would vote against the proposal to levy the millage increase for five years. Instead, he proposed a motion to levy the 2.4 mill increase for only two years, but that motion failed to gain board approval.

"What we should do is request the people to decide what millage is necessary to run programs in the district. I don't believe in earmarking millage and tying the hands of future boards so they can't make sound decisions," Board President William Corliss said.

"It will take a 2.4-mill increase to continue programs next year. Does the community want it or not? I don't think it has a chance of passing, but we should give the community the choice," he continued.

RICHARD RINGSTROM, executive director of the Farmington Education Association, said his organization favors the millage increase.

"As an employee group of this district, we know the facts and what will happen without the extra millage. Eighty-five teachers are laid-off. The state hasn't met its obligations this year and probably won't next year either."

"We know the program will be the same next year. If the district doesn't get the funds, we know all the things that will happen when the district is faced with an operating deficit."

"I think the board must offer an opportunity to the citizens to fund their schools to their fullest extent possible," Ringstrom concluded.

"I think it is their responsibility to fund

their schools to continue the same programs next year."

After passage of the 2.4 mill increase for five years, Lichtman asked the board to take a revote so that the record would

show an unanimous decision by the board in passing the proposal.

But Spiece wanted the record to show the split vote and voted against the proposal.



Sewing anyone? Discussing the pros and cons of the craft are some cast members in the North Farmington High School production of "Fiddler on the Roof," to be presented May 6, 7

and 8 at 8 p.m. Cast members are (from left) Clay Scowcraft (Mendel), Larry Lichtman (the Rabbi), Bob Reed (Motel) and Paul Becker (Perchik). (Photo by Evert)

Floyd Cairns has tales to tell after 20 years of city service

By RON GARBINSKI

In his 20 years as Farmington Hills' city clerk, Floyd Cairns has seen a lot of changes.

To name a few, he has witnessed the development of sewers and water systems, the organization of a public works department, the transition from township to city and the turnover of many city employees.

When he first entered the municipal government scene in 1956, he was defeated for the clerk's post by a "nice 30-year-old man by about 40 votes."

But his opponent soon resigned and the then Farmington Township Board appointed Cairns the new township clerk.

"That was 20 years ago last January," Cairns says. "And it's been a great time ever since."

"I was the township's first full-time clerk. At times, in the beginning, I wondered what I would do with all my time because I really didn't have much to do."

"But that quickly changed. The township supervisor died and I was named acting supervisor until a new one was appointed."

"I HAD TO be in and handle all the projects that he started. I had to make sure these projects continued according to plan," he continues. "As the years went by, the job kept changing and work got heavier."

His job as city clerk never has a dull moment. He is always talking with residents. When somebody wants to know what's going on in Farmington Hills, they usually end up at the clerk's office.

For Cairns, his job as city clerk never has a dull moment. He always is talking with residents. When somebody wants to know what's going on in Farmington Hills, they usually end up at the clerk's office.

"You'd be amazed at the number of people that come to the counter just to say hello," Cairns explains. "And that makes me feel good."

"When residents have complaints, especially the older ones who know me better, they call me if they can't get satisfaction elsewhere."

"I suppose I'm pretty well known to the community because I've been around so long. So they usually come to me. But during my tenure as city clerk, I've had a lot of hair-raising experiences and have met some good people and some bad ones along the way."

When the township made the transition to becoming a city, there was a lot of

paper work and physical problems to work out, Cairns recalls.

TO START OFF, the city had a rough time financially. The county was carrying the city while it attempted to increase its income and provide services for city residents.

"The city had to set up the public works department, expand its services and do everything else required to become a city," he remembers. "You name it, I probably was there to help in some way."

In his role as clerk, Cairns has many functions. His office handles all elections, receives city correspondence, keeps city records, authorizes payments and issues bonds, sets up special assessment districts, re-signs all city contracts and documents and obtains all easements for water or sewer projects.

"There are just a few of our duties in the city clerk's office. There always is something to keep us busy. If it's not taking care of records and correspondence, then it's preparing for an election," Cairns says.

"Handling elections is one of our pri-

mary concerns. When I first started as clerk back in 1956, there were only four voting precincts. So handling an election wasn't that difficult back then."

"But we have witnessed a growth boom in Farmington Hills. Instead of only four precincts, we now have 23. Instead of only about 1,500 registered voters, as was the case in 1960, the city now has more than 28,000 voters."

"So you can just imagine what the population increase has done to the amount of work this office does," the city clerk explains.

CAIRNS, WHO has been a life-long Farmington Hills resident, has witnessed the growth of Farmington Hills.

Twenty-one years ago the city was mostly farms.

Soon there were two new subdivisions, and later the community began to experience a housing and industrial boom.

"Our first obstacle was getting water into the dry areas of the township," he says. "An awful lot of people didn't have water and sewers, and we worked on that for a number of years before we succeeded."

"Financing was hard because we didn't have the people back then as a revenue basis to pay off the bonds," Cairns continues.

But since that feeble beginning, Cairns sold bonds to start the water and sewer systems in the city, as well as connecting with the Detroit sewer interceptor system.

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FLOYD CAIRNS

District to close more schools

By RON GARBINSKI

Students attending Ten Mile Elementary soon may lose their school.

At the Farmington School Board meeting Tuesday night, Asst. Supt. of Elementary Education Larry Freedman recommended that the board close the Ten Mile facility.

Crime probes continue

Checking several possible leads, Farmington Hills police and fire officials are continuing their investigations into last week's bank robbery and suspected arson.

Hills detectives and FBI agents are examining the evidence gathered in the Thursday, April 29, Manufacturers National Bank robbery, a police spokesman said.

In that holdup, three masked gunmen escaped with \$30,000 in cash and used three different stolen cars to make their get-away.

While police follow up on the bank robbery, fire officials are awaiting the result

of a state police crime lab test of evidence collected at the scene of the April 29 arson of three Farmington Hills Ambulance Co. vehicles.

One vehicle was completely destroyed in the blaze and the other two were reported damaged as damage estimates exceeded \$27,000.

Fire investigators will know for certain later this week whether an accelerant was used in the arson incident when they receive the state police's special test report, a fire official said.

greatest savings for the district.

"The condition of the Ten Mile facility is in poor shape and overall there are 25 major items in need of repair."

"When a district is forced to make drastic moves, it must consider the financial savings in closing a school," Freedman explained.

IF THE district decides to close the Ten Mile Elementary School, many families affected by the Farmington Junior High closing will be uprooted again.

At its meeting Tuesday night, the board decided to "accept" the very professional and in-depth report, and recommendations the administrators imposed for the closing of Ten Mile School, but it didn't take action on the recommendation.

Members will continue to study the possibility of closing elementary schools within the district.

Since most board members felt more consideration and facts are necessary, before any decision on school closings can be made, they accepted the administrators' recommendations and decided not to take action.

The board recently accepted the admin-

istrators to make several proposals for the possible closing of elementary schools.

These school officials presented several plans to the board for their consideration, but administrators felt that the closing of the Ten Mile facility was the most appropriate at this time.

Freedman also pointed out that conditions in the district have changed since last year when another citizen's committee recommended the closing of Middle Belt Elementary School.

"We are experiencing similar conditions at Ten Mile as was the case last year for Middle Belt School," Freedman explained.

"MIDDLE BELT now houses a new media center and has a new roof. When we talk about shutting from this school to one of the oldest in the district, we are talking about a mere economical move."

The situation has changed at Middle Belt. The situation has changed at Ten Mile. Enrollments have gone up and down at both schools. So this is why we have changed the recommendation," Freedman

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Don't miss the special "Home and Garden" section included in today's paper. It's full of ideas you can use to ready your property for summer.