

Farmington Observer

Volume 17 Number 134

Monday, October 18, 1976

Farmington, Michigan

3 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents



Pumpkins galore

Fall is here and pumpkin fever hits everyone as the Halloween season grows near. Everyone, children and adults alike, are young again when it comes to buying a pumpkin. These folks ventured to Farmington Hills to pick their choice of the year. Michael Janness (top) gets a helping hand from mom, Mrs. Gloria Janness, while Mary Borkowski (left) lifts a big soon-to-be jack-o-lantern and eats, what else, an apple. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)



Groups unite to fight proposition C

Farmington-area employees, political and school groups are gearing up for a last-minute battle against proposal C which they view as a threat to state funding of schools.

The groups believe the proposal to limit state spending would also place a hardship upon low-income families and the elderly.

The plan would limit the amount the state takes in taxes to 8.3 per cent of the combined personal incomes of Michigan residents.

The League of Women Voters of Farmington and West Bloomfield, Farmington PTA, groups the Farmington Democratic Club, the Farmington Education Association and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees have joined the area's coalition against proposal C.

"Passage of the proposal would lead to dire consequences for the schools," said PTA president Richard Ringstrom. "Education is the largest program and would receive the potential cutbacks," he said.

It's poorly conceived. It would take years to interpret," he said.

THE PROPOSAL would limit state

spending to the 8.3 per cent of the combined personal incomes of all residents which Michigan could collect.

Federal aid would be excluded from the proposal's restrictions, according to Paula Tobacman, president of the LWV.

The state would refund the excess revenue it collected to individual tax payers through state income tax refunds," she said.

Those people who don't pay state tax don't receive the rebate," she said. "That would include senior citizens."

The restriction could be exceeded if the governor declared a financial emergency and if two-thirds of the legislature passed the decree.

"It's not well written," Ms. Tobacman said. "It's full of loopholes."

The vague wording of the proposal, which is a constitutional amendment, leaves it up to the legislature to implement it, according to Ms. Tobacman and Ringstrom.

"They say that the legislature isn't responsibly handling the state's money," Ringstrom said. "Then they tell the leg-

islature to implement this proposal, if it passes.

One of the classic loopholes it has is that it doesn't define the word revenue.

Does it refer to gross revenue, the money it collects, or does it refer to net revenue, the money that it actually can spend after paying off debts," Ringstrom said.

Another objection to the proposal is that it will fluctuate with the fortunes of the tax payers. In times of recession or depression, when residents don't have as much money, the state won't be able to collect as much.

"Since it depends on the combined personal income of the residents, when the people don't have money and are looking to the state, the state won't have the money, either," Ringstrom said.

If the state limits its spending to 8.3 per cent of the combined personal income in the state, it may not be able to keep up with the residents' demands for services, according to Ms. Tobacman.

"If the citizens' demand services, the state may have to cut programs to keep

up," she said. "They may cut programs that the local governments can keep up or replace. These programs can include local school programs or some local police programs."

"ALTHOUGH THE BILL prohibits the cancellation of existing state funded programs which are mandated, it could allow the withdrawal of state funds earmarked for discretionary local use," warned school board President Anne Struble.

"Our concern is that the state will cut out aid to the schools and social welfare programs," she said.

"I fear that if relief on property tax for low income and elderly families is reduced because of this bill, the elderly may not be as willing to vote for a school millage," she said.

"I would like to see the school board become officially involved in this," she said.

"But I have to meet with the whole group about this first."

Inflexible limits on state spending could go to supplement federal programs to aid the elderly," said Ms. Tobacman.

Schools pare budget, brace for state cut

Despite rising property values, Farmington school administrators have pared \$1.3 million from the 1976-1977 budget.

The other side of the coin shows the district losing 250 students from last year and facing the threat of further cutbacks in state funds.

The \$24.4 million school budget shows surplus of \$423,346, which educators are hoarding in case Governor Milliken announces further budget cuts to the schools.

It is entirely possible that the governor might cut between \$30 million to \$150 million from the state budget," said School Superintendent Lewis Schulman.

"I'm a little scared about this school budget," he said. "But we have the fund equity (surplus) to use to avoid additional cutbacks, once the school year gets underway."

"THIS TIME, the first time that we have known about impending state cutbacks and a budget ahead of time to accommodate them," he said.

But the fund equity is only .017 per cent of the \$24,410,650 million budget," Schulman said. "What we have can disappear quickly."

You can't call that money a surplus," he added.

The budget includes the district's \$3,391,720 share of state aid, distributed according to the number of a district's students and the State Equalized Valuation (SEV) of property in that area.

Districts with declining enrollments and an increasing SEV receive less state aid.

Last year, the district received \$4,711,515 from the state for its 14,611 students, according to Farmington School District Business Manager William Prisk. The 1975-76 budget was \$2,342,600.

That amounted to \$169.29 per student. This year, the state aid allotment divides into \$247.85 per student.

The district spends about \$167.66 per school child, according to Prisk.

In addition to state aid based on enrollment and property values, the district will receive \$44,600 from Michigan.

That money goes toward driver education and vocational programs which are state supported.

While rising property values have caused a decrease in the state aid to the district, it has also caused a slight increase in the amount of school tax revenue.

Last year, the district received \$16,796,722 in school millage from its 39 mill school tax.

In 1977-1978, the district expects to receive \$16,863,371 in property tax money.

Although 37 teachers have been pink-slipped, the budget includes an increase in expenditures for elementary and secondary teacher salaries.

These increases are due to teachers on the basis of their seniority in the district," explained Schulman.

THIS YEAR'S budget allows \$5,340,380 for secondary teachers. Last year's budget gave them \$5,185,784 in salaries.

Elementary teachers have been given \$4,700,206 in the budget this year.

Last year they received \$4,629,633.

Most of the cuts in the budget stem from such items as a decrease in the number of teachers, principals, drivers, and mechanics," explained Schulman.

The closing of Farmington Junior High School eliminated one principal from the school rolls.

However, the decline in enrollment doesn't accompany a decrease in maintenance costs.

"There's no real financial gain when you lose students," Schulman said.

"We may have fewer students but it costs us about the same to keep up the buildings," he said.

"Everyone is facing increases in their fuel and electrical bills," he said.

The district has increased its allotment for fuel bills to \$498,121, in contrast with the \$460,250 it budgeted for 1976-77.

Water and electricity charges have been budgeted at \$638,573. Last year the district spent \$601,078.

"We've cut out all we can without damaging the educational program," Schulman said. "We can't cut electricity and heat to the schools."

Fire inspection could lower rates

If all that dirty water floating around on City of Farmington streets last Wednesday was anything like heart.

The Insurance Service Bureau of Michigan was in town last week testing the city's firefighting capabilities. If the city shapes up, the insurance rating could be lowered, meaning that homeowners fire insurance costs could be reduced by 10 per cent.

City Mgr. Bob Deadman thinks there is a good possibility that could happen.

"WE'VE MADE A lot of improvements since the last time we were inspected in 1962," he said. "We're pretty sure the city is going to do good enough to get our rating lowered."

Since 1962, the city has hooked into the county water system. Also the fire department equipment has been updated.

"Of course there are some things we know we will receive deficiency points on such as mowing five man fire rigs. Hardly any city in the country can meet that requirement," he said.

Every city in the country is rated on the same basis. Farmington is tested against the same scale as the City of New York, said Deadman.

PRESENTLY, THE CITY has a rate seven. Deadman is hoping that will be brought down to a rate six.

Inspectors not only check out the fire department. They also check fire prevention codes, building codes and ordinances as well as how well buildings within the city meet the codes.

After they make their inspection, there isn't any argument. The standards are the same for everyone. You either make it or deficiency points keep you in the same category," he said.

On Wednesday, the water pressure from fire hydrants was being tested. Officials from the inspection firm were opening up valves to see just what the pressure would be.

Deadman said the city will know the results of the testing in from 60 to 90 days.

The short of it

Volunteers battle rules

Two Farmington Hills volunteer firefighters are battling height and age regulations which prevent them from becoming full-time members, although they already are working 40-hour weeks for the department.

Harold Sweet, 35, and Jon Quisenberry, 31, will meet Farmington Hills in Oakland County Circuit Court, Oct. 27.

They also will make Farmington Hills' case Nov. 22 state with the Michigan Employment Regulations Commission (MERC) in Detroit.

Farmington Hills regulations are based on existing restrictions under the State Civil Service Act and on recommendation by the National Fire Protection Association, according to Fire Chief John Van Voort.

Full-time firemen in the Hills are required to be between 18 and 31 years old, and between five-foot-eight inches and six-foot-four inches tall.

Sweet is five-foot-seven inches tall and Quisenberry is five-foot-six inches in height.

"They've been working 40 hours a week since about March 1974," said Jessica Cooper, a Farmington Hills attorney, who is representing Sweet and Quisenberry.

They're paid \$3.50 an hour when they are on duty and \$7 an hour when they go out on a run," she said.

"BUT THEY DON'T receive a pension, hospitalization or other benefits a full-time employee would," Ms. Cooper explained.

Sweet, who is too old for the department, under the present regulations, has been a volunteer for about three or four years, according to his attorney.

Quisenberry has been with the Farmington Hills volunteers since October 1975, attorney Cooper said.

"We're asking Judge Steven Andrews in Circuit Court for an injunction against the city's hiring any full-time firemen until these two men have a chance to test for the job," said Ms. Cooper.

"We're protesting the age discrimination. These men are already working full-time. They're doing the same tasks as full-time firefighters. But they're salaried now as opposed to hourly."

"They're concerned about pension," she said. "They've even admitted it."

Ms. Cooper will argue that regulations are arbitrary and capricious.

"They are discriminatory," she said. "They are in violation of the Fair Employment Practice Act and both the State and Federal Constitutions," she said.

"We know that the Hills will ask for an accelerated judgment," she said. "That is what they will argue that because we're also going to MERC, the court doesn't have any jurisdiction in the matter."

BOTH MEN HAVE tried to avoid taking the case to court, she said.

"I've tried to talk to the Hills city attorney, but no one would listen."

Van Voort stands by his regulations.

"If you get a man at 35, by the time he's 40, he begins to pace himself. The physical activity of this job includes tagging and hugging."

"If the man's older, he can sit up front. But a younger man's better for the job," Van Voort said.

He believes that men of uniform height contribute to efficiency.

If the men are about the same height it makes team work easier," he said.

There's a safety factor in the height regulation, too. A man can't lift his own weight. Many times, the men have to lift occupants from a building, or other foremen. A short man couldn't do as well," he said.

The volunteers were accepted regardless of height and age.

The volunteer system doesn't provide for versatility," he said. "With full-time men, you should be selective."

Clarenceville board opposes Proposal C

Clarenceville Board of Education Thursday voiced its opposition to state Proposal C on the Nov. 2 ballot.

The proposal if approved would limit state governmental spending to 8.3 per cent of all Michigan personal income.

The board, in joining numerous other school boards and city and state officials, said it is opposed to Proposal C for several reasons.

One is that it would result in local property taxes being raised to meet needs left unprovided for by the proposed state spending limitation.

Another would be that it would "subvert if not prevent the long-called for overhaul of education financing."

The schools would have to seek higher and higher millage rates to keep even in an inflationary economy."

BEAUTIFUL DAY

It was a beautiful day for many Farmington businessmen who were honored by the Farmington Beautification Commission at their annual luncheon this past week. To see who was honored, turn to page 3A.

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