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Millage vote set in April for schools

Officials and administrators in the Farmington Schools are gearing up for a campaign to persuade the voters to renew \$2 million in millage on April 5.

Administrators are predicting ruin for the system if voters reject the four-mill renewal.

"I don't even want to think about what would happen if the millage failed," said Trustee Helen Prutow.

"We might as well shut the doors."

"It would be a disaster. A big disaster," she said.

"Terrible things would happen," agreed School Supt. Lewis Schulman.

"Two million dollars would be a lot to take from our budget. This renewal is absolutely necessary. That millage

goes to general operating expenses, such as salaries, books, maintenance and educational materials," he said.

Like other persons involved in the system, Schulman expressed confidence in the voters.

"The voters have been good in their understanding of the renewal issue," he said.

"THE VOTERS HAVEN'T rejected a millage renewal, yet," said Mrs. Prutow.

"This district has been marvelous about renewals."

The school board had the importance of the issue in mind when they carefully selected the election date.

A Saturday date for the election was considered but rejected when board members realized that the day

could conflict with a religious holiday and weekend vacations.

"A great number of families in this area leave on the weekends," pointed out Bud Pickett, a member of the citizens' millage committee.

"Tuesday's the best day. We get the best support from parents of students. And this date enables us to send home reminders with the children on Monday and Tuesday."

"Just a few votes can swing an election," he said.

Another problem with a Saturday election, is the difficulty of finding election workers for that day, according to William Prisk, district business manager.

Since the board was looking at dates early in the year, another strike

against a Saturday date was the occurrence of Passover, April 2.

The date was suggested by Trustee Michael Shpiece, who reminded the board it would still give the millage committee time to organize.

"It's insulting to consider a Saturday election," said Trustee Gary Lichtman. "N-O, no. Unless you want the election on Palm Sunday. That Saturday, Passover begins at sundown."

"To suggest the first day of Passover is less than considerate, less than subtle," Lichtman said.

Shpiece apologized, but persisted in presenting a Saturday election. His suggestion that the date be changed to March 25, garnered little support among board members.

Grant program aids residents

By STEVE BARNABY

Farmington editor

The Farmington Hills loans and grants program, helping homeowners in the southeast section to rehabilitate their homes, could be eligible for even more funds in March, according to administrative assistant Michael Dornan.

Dornan, along with housing code enforcement officer Dick Young, literally has been out knocking on doors in the area between Eight and Nine Mile roads and Orchard Lake and Inkster roads to sell the program launched last September.

Under the federally funded program, homeowners either can receive a loan or an outright grant up to \$5,000 to rehabilitate their homes. Those persons qualifying for a loan have to pay three per cent interest, according to Dornan.

"This is a remarkably good deal for persons who want to fix up their homes. Most private remodeling companies charge 12 or 13 per cent interest on loans. Some even charge as much as 20 per cent," he said.

FARMINGTON HILLS was given \$23,000 to launch its program last year.

Dornan hopes that all the money can be used so the city can go back to the county and show a future need for more funds.

"I've been spending my money and I could use more and more. I've been hitting every individual in the community who may be eligible. Hopefully, this will inspire more applicants," he said.

Dornan is proud of the city's success, saying that other communities haven't been spending their funds. Communities which don't spend their funds will be penalized and won't receive as much money this year, Dornan doesn't want Farmington Hills to fall into that classification.

To promote the effort further, he is sending out brochures to eligible homeowners informing them of how to qualify for the funds.

Under the program, eligible persons can use the funds to install water heaters, furnaces, siding, plumbing or electrical equipment, he said.

Dornan and Young personally visit an applicant's home to show him how best he might use the money.

"A lot of persons are reluctant to admit they need the money. Some of them come to the office, pick up an application and we don't hear from them again," Dornan said.

BUT DORNAN doesn't let that faze him. If the applicants don't respond, he gives them a call asking them to turn in the forms.

Persons who rehabilitate their homes with the funds are not allowed to sell the structure within a year of the loan or grant.

"If they sell within a year they have to repay the entire loan," he said.

The loans have an overall interest rate of 12 per cent. Nine per cent of the loan is subsidized, leaving three per cent for the homeowner to pay.

The county selects the contractor.

Although Dornan is pleased with the success of the program in Farmington Hills, he believes it could be changed to better accommodate the community's needs.

Under the program 20 per cent of the funds can be used as outright grants and 80 per cent for the loans.

"But we have a lot of persons who can't afford even the three per cent interest. I'm not saying the entire program should be done with 100 per cent grants, but the federal guidelines are restrictive," he says.

"The program is good because it builds the character of the community. It's a good thing that persons feel the responsibility of paying off the interest. But there are some people who just can't make it, even though they would like to try," he says.

Dornan emphasized the program is an attempt to build up the housing in the community, while creating as little frustration as possible.

To alleviate that frustration, Dornan aids in filling out the forms and hand delivers them to Oakland County authorities.

The eligibility income begins with a maximum of \$7,500 for one-person household and rises to \$15,500 for an eight-person family. Two-person families qualify \$10,150 maximum, three persons at \$11,450, four persons at \$12,700, five persons at \$13,500, six persons at \$14,300 and seven persons at \$15,100.

Renters are ineligible. Those persons interested should contact Dornan at Farmington Hills City Hall.

C'ville has absentee ballots for tax vote

The Clarenceville School district has absentee ballots for persons who can't get to the polls for a special millage election on Monday, Jan. 17.

Deadline for applying for the absentee ballots is Saturday, Jan. 15. The school board office at 2830 Eight Mile, east of Middle Belt, from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. that day to receive the ballots. Interested persons may also contact Mrs. Geraldine Kelly at the board office, 474-8900, during the week.

The special election will have two propositions on the ballot: five mill renewal (\$5 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) for 10 years and a three mill increase for five years.

The district includes parts of Livonia, Farmington Hills and Redford Township.



Farmington Hills firefighters finish off a blaze that began when occupants of the home tried to thaw out a water pipe using a propane

ane torch. (Photo by Cynthia Abatt)

2 fires hit Farmington Hills

Farmington Hills firefighters were kept busy Thursday by two blazes which severely damaged area homes.

An afternoon blaze at 24871 Westmoorland began when a visitor to the home tried to thaw out its frozen water pipes with a propane torch.

Floyd Harden of Westland was working over the pipes in the garage when the building caught on fire.

The blaze spread into the family room and eventually caused \$20,000 in

damage to the house, owned by Dorothy Carrabotta.

No one was injured. Three fire stations answered the call at 4:08 p.m., according to fire chief John Van De Voort.

"For all practical purposes, the house is gone," he said.

He advised homeowners to call a plumber if their water pipes are frozen.

Earlier Thursday, the volunteers

were sent to 33110 Tulane. Gary Reini reported to the department that he was sitting in his living room, drinking beer and watching television when the fire broke out at 4:30 a.m.

Reini noticed flames in the kitchen. He tried to enter the room but the heat kept him out.

Instead, he awakened his two children and escaped to a neighbor's home.

No one was injured in the blaze.

The cause of the fire remains undetermined.

Fire officials estimate that \$20,000 damage resulted from the blaze, including \$5,000 in contents.

"At this point, we're looking at this as a suspicious fire," Van De Voort said.

The house is damaged beyond repair. "They couldn't live in it at this point," Van De Voort said.

Library receives foundation grant

The Farmington Community Library has received an \$8,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation which will be used for a bi-county computerized cataloging program.

The grant extends over two years. "This grant will provide easy access to resources in all libraries, both academic and public, for every patron of any library throughout the state," according to Farmington Library director Gordon Lewis.

The Farmington Library will be co-operating with 60 other libraries in the Wayne-Oakland counties to produce a computerized catalogue of materials that are owned by all of these libraries, according to Lewis. The end result will be microfilm copies of a joint catalogue of all libraries in Wayne and Oakland counties.

The state library is Lansing will collect copies of regional catalogues that are produced throughout the state and residents will have easy access to books in any library in the state.

"The technology for computerized catalogues has been available for several years, but the funds haven't been available to move ahead in this area," he says.

"The cooperative use of resources will not only increase services for all Michigan residents, but also it will tend to reduce duplication of materials that only are occasionally needed."

Dr. Russel Mawby, Kellogg Foundation president, says the grant to the Farmington Library is one of approximately 450 similar awards being made to public and academic libraries throughout the state.

Paper program discontinued

The ill-fated newspaper pickup program sponsored by the City of Farmington Hills has hit the dust.

The program had been reinstituted last year to allow residents to leave old newspapers out on the corners for pickup. The papers were dropped off at city hall and loaded into a special truck to be recycled. But the rising price of paper made it just too attractive for "scavengers," according to Administrative Assistant Michael Dornan.

"The price of paper has gone up to \$20 and \$25 a ton. It's very attractive for individuals to come and pick up the papers before the trucks get there," says Dornan.

In an attempt to counter the paper pickers, the city arranged to have a special truck come around to pick up the papers before the regularly sched-

uled trucks made their stops. But, that effort also proved unsuccessful, according to Dornan.

The city also had requested that persons take license numbers of those scavenging the papers. But, residents were reluctant to get involved in that type of effort, says Dornan.

"By mid-December we just weren't picking up enough papers to make the effort worthwhile. The firm providing the trailer in city hall parking lot just couldn't afford to leave it there any longer," says Dornan.

Dornan urges that those persons still interested in having their papers recycled should search out other recycling centers. Residents also are welcomed to still leave their papers at the corners for the garbage men to pick up.

But the city no longer will be involved in the program.



In pursuit of winter

This lonely figure walks across the barren snow in search of some winter fun. Safely wrapped up to protect himself from the cold, this young man will enjoy hours of fun until the sun shines again.

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IT'S BUNK

Farmington Editor Steve Barnaby doesn't think much about all the flak over capital punishment. To see what he has to say, turn to Page 10A.