

OCC to seek millage 'transfer' in June election

By TOM LONERGAN

Oakland Community College will ask county voters June 9 to approve more operating money for the four-campus system without an increase in the 1.7 mills property tax rate.

The OCC Board of Trustees last week unanimously approved placing a millage transfer proposal on the June 9 ballot. That will be the same election in which voters elect board members and local K-12 school boards.

OCC is seeking voter approval to transfer two-tenths of a mill, now applied towards bonded debt retirement, to the general operating millage.

Since 1984, residents in the OCC district have paid one mill (\$1 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) for college operations. As bond issues were approved for new campus buildings, the OCC tax rate increased to 1.7 mills. That seven-tenths of a mill, however, can only be used to pay off the college's

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building debts and can't be applied toward OCC operation and maintenance costs without voter approval.

OCC would not transfer the two-tenths of a mill to the operating fund, according to President Robert Roelofs, until we decreased our debt service millage.

Roelofs said the two-tenths of a mill (20 cents per \$1,000 in assessed valuation) "would net OCC approximately \$2 million" for its general fund.

"This proposition, which represents no increase in millage, might have an opportunity of passing," said Roelofs. The ballot proposal limits the transfer to two-tenths of a mill.

IF APPROVED the extra operating millage would not be levied until July 1981. Roelofs said the operating millage would be increased in stages, with the full two-tenths of a mill transfer completed two to three years after passage.

He said increased costs of new career programs in OCC's curriculum and higher building maintenance costs necessitate the millage transfer.

"We really were thinking about next year (for the millage proposal)," Roelofs said. But he added, "Some of the more onerous provisions of that more onerous proposition, the Tisch Amendment," led college officials to try the ballot proposal this year.

The Tisch Amendment, named after Shawnee County Drain Commissioner Robert Tisch, proposes a 50 percent reduction in property taxes and requires that property tax increases be approved by a minimum 60 percent of the voters.

Tisch campaigners are collecting signatures to put the proposal on the November ballot.

Even though more than 60 percent of the state's voters rejected a similar Tisch ballot proposal in November

1978, Roelofs wrote board members that the newest tax cut effort "very possibly might be passed in November."

DESPITE THE trustees' unanimous vote, several were cautious about the millage transfer proposal's chances.

"I understand technically it's not an increase, but that's only technical," said Trustee David Hackett.

Hackett, who plans to seek re-election this year, said he'll vote for the transfer, but added: "I don't know if I can ask everyone in the county who doesn't have the same feeling about the college as I do to do the same thing."

Noting that the ballot proposal includes the word "levied," Trustee Su-

zanne Reynolds said: "The ordinary guy going into that voting booth not worrying about OCC could care less and he's not going to want his taxes raised for anything."

OCC's one-mill tax for its general fund hasn't been increased since it was first approved by voters in 1964.

"The community college education has been the cheapest education to that taxpayer," said board vice-chairman Earl Anderson.

"They don't know what it costs them for those four-year schools. If they did, they'd probably drop dead of a heart attack."

Board chairman Lila Johnson will chair the millage campaign.

New theater to seat 500 at college

A \$2 million fine arts building renovation on Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus was approved by the Board of Trustees last week.

The board, by a 6-1 vote, awarded a \$2,038,000 contract to Elgin Builders, Inc., of Southfield, to construct a new Fine Arts Theater on the Farmington Hills campus and renovate the Orchard Ridge music and art building.

Trustee Barbara Willing voted no.

A ROOF will be constructed over the Orchard Ridge outdoor amphitheatre, which will eventually become the 500-seat theater. The campus "L" building, which houses music and art classes, will be renovated as part of the project. Elgin was the lowest of 10 firms which bid on the project last December. Even with that kind of competi-

tion, the Elgin bid was \$388,000 over what the college had budgeted for the project.

OCC officials and Elgin were able to modify the project plans to meet the budget, however.

W. H. Nickel, OCC vice president for business, said the bond revenues for the project totaled \$1.6 million. He said interest earnings from the bond revenues added \$238,000 for the project.

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