

Why county parks seek tax renewal

By TIM RICHARD

"So far, we have been able to spend 57 percent of the millage money on expansion and development. If the millage lost, you would have a status quo parks system."

R. Eric Reickel, director of the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department, is working to make his program a household word for a pair of reasons.

One is that "we teach people how to

use the parks" with their special facilities.

The other is that a property tax renewal question is on the Aug. 5 ballot, and parks planning will be crimped if it's defeated.

OAKLAND PARKS have been getting a quarter-mill (25 cents per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) in property taxes for 14 years. It now costs the owner of a \$60,000 house \$7.50 a year.

Three times voters have approved

the millage for five-year periods. This year there's a recession and an anti-tax mood.

If that worries Reickel, he doesn't show it. The last renewal passed comfortably in May of 1976, just as the economy was emerging from a serious recession.

"I can never see a time when a quarter-mill will not be needed," Reickel said. "But I have no objection to going out every five years and baring our souls."

The most common question he gets is this: When the park system charges a \$2 per car user fee (\$3 for non-residents), why is a quarter-mill property tax needed?

The answer: Those fees cover operations. The bulk of the tax money is used to buy property and develop the system. Increasingly, however, the tax money, too, is being used for operations.

"IF THE PARKS system were to operate on a straight 'pay-as-you-go' basis, the cost would be out of reach for the average person," said Reickel. "The goal of the Oakland County parks



R. ERIC REICKEL

is to provide a moderate-priced parks system with quality programs and maintenance."

Total budget is \$4.4 million for 1980.

Here is where it comes from:

• User fees provide \$1.88 million or 41 percent.

The millage provides \$2.5 million or 56 percent.

• State and federal grants range from \$100,000 to \$300,000, or in the 3 percent range. Reickel noted that these are drying up as the federal government makes fewer open space grants.

WHERE DOES IT GO?

Of the total, \$3.6 million is for operations. That's almost double what user fees bring in. Thus, the millage brings in half the operating money and most of the \$558,000 for capital.

Defeat would mean a halt to acquisitions, a halt to development, an end to preventive maintenance and a reduction of general maintenance. In time, it would mean program cuts, too, said Reickel.

Couldn't the county general fund be used for parks? No, answered Reickel. "The county says anything not mandated by state law is to be self-supporting."

Next: How county parks fit into the scheme of recreation.

Immunization push from health dept.

Oakland County Health Division offices will be open Monday evenings for three months beginning in August for required public school student immunizations.

State law requires entering-kindergarten and newly enrolled students to have immunizations for diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella.

Monday hours beginning Aug. 4 are 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Other weekday hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

County health department offices are in Southfield, 27725 Greenfield Road, and in Pontiac at 1200 N. Telegraph (Oakland County Service Center). There is no charge, and appointments are not required.

This is the second year of a statewide push for student immunizations, following a report that many students were being admitted without them.

Women successful in engineering field

Sixty-six of Michigan State University's spring graduates in engineering have begun making names for themselves as women successful in what has been for decades men's turf.

The women represented 16 percent of the total of 368 earning bachelor's degrees in spring term.

Not only are the MSU women engineers being accepted by employers who are "very pleased" with them, they are being offered salaries in excess of those offered to their male counterparts.

Rebecca Yost of MSU's placement Services said MSU women chemical engineering grads with bachelor's degrees were being offered an average of \$1,836 a month, compared with \$1,780 for men.

The larger offers, Ms. Yost said, also came for women engineers with bachelor's degrees in electrical engineering, with \$1,763 offered compared to \$1,724 for men; in mechanical engineering, \$1,694 compared to \$1,686; in computer science, with \$1,693 compared to \$1,686; and civil engineering, \$1,693 compared to \$1,564.



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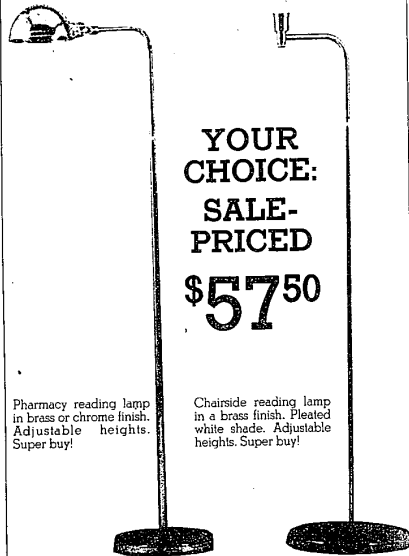
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