

Spending plan outlined

City Council conservatives split on excess funds

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Farmington Hills City Council members were surprised to learn recently that a surplus of \$1,103,039 has resulted from over-budgeted expenses and underestimated revenues during fiscal 1981-82.

How to spend the money will be the topic of an Oct. 4 study session. Finance Director Charles Rosch proposed Monday that \$903,000 of the surplus

be appropriated to reserves for road and building improvements, equipment and sick leave funds.

Council member Charles Williams criticized the city administration and the finance department for the delay in bringing accurate figures to the council. He also voiced strong opposition to Rosch's appropriation plan.

"The council has the responsibility of developing a budget plan and advertising public hearings on it. If we'd had these figures then, maybe (council

member) Don Wolf could successfully have argued to lower taxes more, or we could have come up with some worthy projects," he said.

"It also might have made a difference in our approach to salaries and other expenditures. Williams, an accountant, called Rosch's plan "questionable and not in the best interest of citizens."

"I don't think pushing the surplus into reserves is being honest with the public. Indeed the situation as it exists

is misleading," he said.

"I feel seriously these reserves are too much for the city to retain." Williams proposed that the surplus be spent on a worthy capital improvement project.

Countered Rosch, "What I projected for the unappropriated fund balance I don't consider excessive based on the rules of thumb of financial institutions," he said.

"In computing bond ratings for cities, Wall Street rating agencies like to

see an unappropriated fund balance of 12-13 percent of the operating budget."

Rosch said \$197,061 of the surplus was used to balance the 1982-83 budget, leaving a surplus of 11.7 percent of the \$14 million operating budget.

Williams, however, pointed out that the city has \$2 million in appropriated funds. Added to unappropriated funds, the surplus amounts to 35 percent of the year's budget.

WHILE ROSCH ADMITS Williams' figures are correct, he said reserves

are set up mainly to fund future capital outlays.

"Some cities have dedicated millages for capital outlays, or they sell general obligation bonds to acquire capital assets. We have neither."

In light of cutbacks in state funding and recent legislation, Rosch said "our operating cushion is not excessive."

"Prior to the Headlee Amendment, the state had unlimited faith in the

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Farmington schools hit hard by drop in births

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Public schools are profoundly affected by slight increases and decreases in the birth rate as evident in the spate of school closings in Farmington and surrounding districts.

Farmington school officials have already closed seven of 19 elementary schools in the district and will announce the closing of an eighth elementary in January when a task force

makes its recommendation. In addition, the school district closed one junior high school in the past decade, Farmington Junior High School.

While administrators say there are no plans at present to close any of the three high schools in the district, enrollment projections say that in 10 years high schools will be about half full barring any major influx from new construction or new industry.

While some teachers have been required to take the place of retiring in-

structors, Supt. Lewis Schulman says there are still 30 laid-off teachers waiting call-back because their jobs were eliminated due to declining enrollment.

Schulman calls the layoffs "one of the sad by-products of declining enrollment."

Enrollment figures in Farmington school district reached a high of 11,556 in school year 1971-72 and are expected to be somewhere around 10,850 when state-mandated First Friday enrollment counts are officially announced on Oct. 1.

THE KINDERGARTEN class of fall of 1981 was the lowest ever with 582 students reporting in that grade. This year the early attendance figure has jumped to 687 students. Nonetheless, looking at the kindergarten-through-fifth-grade group, enrollment is expected to decline until 1984-85 when projections call for a modest 1.93 percent increase.

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RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Jeanette Conrad, a registered nurse at Botsford General Hospital, cradles newborn Andrea Pinchera five hours after her birth. Andrea adds just a wee bit to the current "baby bubble."

It's just a baby boomlet for '80s

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Q. What do you call a baby born to a baby-boom mother?

- (a) A baby boomlet.
- (b) An only child or second child.
- (c) An echo effect.
- (d) Justin or Jennifer.
- (e) All of the above.

The correct answer, according to demographers for the county, state, Michigan State University and the U.S. Bureau of the Census is "e" — all of the above.

"They're calling it the baby-boom echo effect because it's not much of a boom," said Kurt Metzger, information services specialist for the U.S. Bureau of the Census in Detroit.

While national figures show a slight increase, or statistical bubble, in babies being born today, Oakland County and Michigan babies are increasing by a minuscule amount — hardly justifying all the noise about a new boom.

"It's a very modest bubble — more of a barely audible echo (created by the baby-boom mothers) compared to their large, loud, resounding echo," says Fred Ignatovich, Ph.D., of the Michigan State University College of Education who works with Farmington Public Schools in computing enrollment projections.

Ignatovich and his colleague, Dr. Stan Hecker, also do demographic research for the Southfield school district.

Nationally, statewide and in Oakland County, the peak year for births was 1957 — the summit of the baby boom.

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Oakland's growth tops in country

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Looking at raw data, it would appear that Oakland County was ripe for a baby boom in the 1970s.

It didn't happen that way even though Oakland County grew more than 99 percent of all counties in the nation between 1970-80. Of the 50 counties growing the most, all but four — Oakland County included — were in the

south and west, says David R. Hay, assistant county planner in charge of information services.

Nationally, Oakland County ranked 25th largest in terms of population among 3,137 counties in the nation. It ranked 36th in terms of growth during the 1970s, according to census information.

So what's up?

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oral quarrel

How do you feel about park buy?

In recent weeks the city of Farmington Hills has toyed with the idea of purchasing the 210-acre site adjacent to the Farmington Community Center on 11 Mile and Farmington Road for development as a major recreation area.

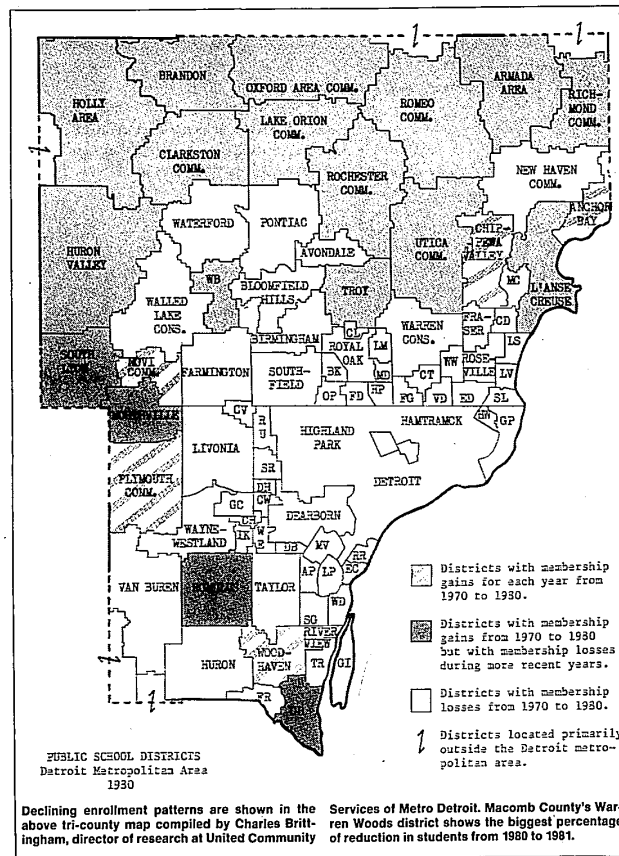
The present owner, Nicholas Spicer, would like to see the public enjoy use of the land as long as much of it is kept in its natural wilderness state.

If the city refuses to purchase the land, Spicer would have little alterna-

tive but to sell it to private developers. This week's Oral Quarrel question is:

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE CITY PURCHASING THE LAND AS A RECREATION AREA? IF THE CITY DOES BUY IT, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT DEVELOPED?

To give your opinion, call Oral Quarrel at 477-5498.



Handful of voters renew millage

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

A five-mill renewal proposal for the Farmington Public Schools passed by almost a 3-1 margin Tuesday in a minuscule turnout of registered voters in the district.

The yes votes totaled 935 and there were 519 no votes with a paltry turnout of 1,254 voters out of a registered voter

pool of 54,300 voters.

The turnout means 2.3 percent of the registered voters turned out to vote. However, school administrators pointed out that Tuesday's turnout was better than the June 14, 1982 school board candidate election where 1,208 persons vote.

"As a district (representative), we are disappointed in the total number of

votes," said Assistant Superintendent Lynn Nutter. "However, we're very pleased by the large number of yes votes. It says several things: that the community is basically happy with the way the school district is operating and it's an indirect compliment to the board of education and the administrative staff."

"The vote is a vote of confidence, I believe."

Nominees sought

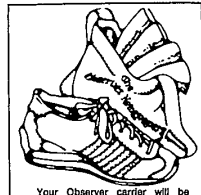
The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce is soliciting nominees for its annual Citizen of the Year award.

Anyone who has given outstanding service to the Farmington area above and beyond job-related duties from September 1981 to September 1982.

There are no age, sex or residency requirements. Nomination forms are available at the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber office and are due Sept. 29.

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