

Clarenceville District to receive more state funds

Clarenceville Public Schools administrators couldn't be happier about an appropriations bill that will increase state aid to schools.

"We're very encouraged by it," said district assistant superintendent for business Edward Salas. "It looks like it will bring us back out of a declining situation."

The "H" Salas refers to is House Bill 4529, signed by Gov. James Blanchard on July 26. The bill adds approximately \$200 million to funding for public education in the state. Total aid to schools for 1983-84 will be \$1.4 billion, a 16-percent increase over 1982-83 funding.

Over the last three years, state aid to school districts was reduced a total of \$261 million. Per-pupil aid decreased from a 1979 peak of \$778 per student to a low point of \$671.

Under the new appropriations, state aid is expected to rise to approximately \$840 per student.

SALAS said the legislation will increase considerably the amount of per-pupil state aid for the Clarenceville district, which includes portions of Livonia, Redford Township and Farmington Hills.

The basic formula for school aid will be \$328 per student, plus \$59 times the district's 37.50 local tax levy. The amount of locally generated tax revenues is then subtracted from the basic formula.

"We are an in-formula district and are tremendously affected by the new bill," Salas said. "We could gain \$189.50 per student on just the basic formula."

The Livonia School District, on the other hand, is not in-formula and receives very little state aid. "Even with this bill," Supt. George Garver said,

"there will be no new dollars to go to out-of-formula districts."

Livonia must rely almost solely on funds generated from local taxes, Garver said.

THE TOTAL amount of school aid which will go to the Clarenceville district is unknown. That's because the actual number of kindergarten through 12th-grade students won't be tallied until the annual fourth Friday count in October.

Another unknown is the number of adult education students who will enroll this fall. (Clarenceville also runs

the Farmington program.) Adult students are counted in school aid formulas, although it takes an average of four adult education students to comprise a full-time student equivalency needed for state aid requirements.

Salas anticipates approximately 2,000 K-12 students and about 175 full-time adult education equivalencies this coming school year.

According to Gov. Blanchard, increased school aid will take the pressure off local districts to raise taxes. "I would hope it would," Salas said. "We're at the top of our millage."

The Clarenceville district's problems were compounded last year when the community's total valuation dropped \$3 million. That translated into \$114,000 in lost revenues for the district.

Added state school aid could ease the budget pinch, Salas said. "There's been a drop in our debt funding, but in our operation last year we had only a 2 percent increase in salaries. We are the lowest in the area in terms of wages."

"If we get these dollars, we should be able to do something better than in the past."

Hills attempts to ease down-sizing fears

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THE ORDINANCE is expected to ease homeowners' worries about down-sizing — building smaller houses of lesser quality in unfinished subdivisions having larger, more expensive houses. And it forces developers and builders to construct new homes that are compatible with existing homes in the neighborhood.

The purpose of the new ordinance, which will be an amendment to the city code, is to "maintain compatibility of new, one-family dwellings with surrounding one-family dwellings to assure that new houses 'conform to certain architectural standards of appearance in conformity with surrounding dwellings.'"

In other words, the ordinance will help "protect existing housing," said city manager Lawrence Savage.

In determining whether a new house does conform with those in the neighborhood, the ordinance requires that the new structure pass four review standards. The first requirement is that a new house must be at least 75 percent of the floor area of homes within 750 feet (in all directions) of the new house. In other words, the new house can only be 25 percent smaller than nearby homes.

A RAMBLEWOOD homeowner claimed that if existing homes are somewhat smaller, the floor area requirement may be appropriate because a new house that is 25 percent smaller could blend into such a neighborhood.

But with larger homes, he said, such as a 4,000-square-foot home, the builder could, under the ordinance, put up a 3,000-square-foot house.

"That's an obvious difference," the homeowner said.

According to the new ordinance, builders must also be sure that:

• The type, quality and "proportional area of coverage" of materials in the house's exterior facade are somewhat similar to nearby homes.

• The architectural character of the new house is somewhat similar to the character of nearby homes, exclusive of the number of stories and/or floor levels.

• The new house's facade, as seen from the street, is not identical to the facades of adjacent houses.

UNDER THIS final review standard, the reviewing officer, who will be the city's director of public services, will determine whether a house is considered identical based on another group of standards. These standards include

measurements of roof ridges, width of outside walls, and window, garage and porch locations.

If the review officer determines that a new house does not meet the ordinance's four review requirements, the builder may appeal to a yet-to-be appointed review board. The three-member board will be composed of one licensed builder, one homeowner and a licensed attorney.

Anger about down-sizing first surfaced in May when homeowners in the Irv Wilcox Estates appealed to the Farmington Hills City Council for help. Joined by homeowners in Foxmoor, Springbrook and Ramblewood subdivisions, the residents claimed that smaller homes in their neighborhoods would bring down the value of their larger homes. Complaints ranged from the size to the quality and architecture of the smaller homes.

In the Springbrook subdivision, for example, a resident told the council the builder now is putting up "nice basically redundant homes."

BUT BUILDERS have pointed out that it has been difficult to sell the larger, expensive homes because potential buyers are now demanding

smaller, less-expensive homes in suburban neighborhoods.

While developers and builders have been building homes that are larger than the city's minimum-size requirements, many of the new houses are smaller than the homes already there.

After homeowners returned to the council in June, city officials agreed to study the problem and draft an ordinance that is similar to one adopted in Novi.

When Bibeau presented city officials with a proposed ordinance in late June, council members did not take action. Instead, they succumbed to pressure from both builders and homeowners who wanted to help draft another ordinance that dealt with both sides' concerns.

While both homeowners and builders agreed the ordinance reasonably addressed the down-sizing trend, Winton told council members that the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan still felt an ordinance was unnecessary. If any damage would be caused by downsized homes, Winton said, the nearby homeowners could seek redress in Oakland County Circuit Court.

Strikers picket Farmington Bell location

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"Six thousand people can't do the job of 25,000, but the public is very understanding," Heinrich said. "People recognize, and we encourage the public to recognize, if they have a telephone directory to use it and not use the assistance."

Supervisors are picking up most of the slack created by the striking workers. Thirty percent of the numbers in the regular force are handling the directory assistance calls, and there are between 50-60 percent of the regular long distance operator service.

"Management folks are handling the job very well, and every effort will be made to maintain service," according to Norah Martin, Michigan Bell manager of corporate affairs.

A CALL by the Farmington Observer to directory information operators on Monday resulted in receiving more than an hour of a steady ringing tone. There still was no answer before the caller finally gave up.

Asked if supervisors were upset about having to fill in for the striking workers, Heinrich said, "When they become a supervisor, they know there is always a possibility that they will have to be called on to fill in if there's a strike."

There also are employees who are neither union nor management.

"We have a number of non-management employees who aren't bargained for, but they're not required to work," Heinrich said. "It's their personal choice if they wish to work."

Most Bell customers won't experience "any delay at all in any way, shape or form," because the majority of calls are direct dial, Heinrich said.

According to a memo to local union officers and stewards, written by CWA International Vice President Martin Hughes, the company made a wage offer ranging from zero percent at the starting rate to 2.7 percent at the top rate in the first year, with cost-of-living increases in each of the second and third years.

The company suggested that a limit on the cost-of-living increases should not be more than 4 percent of the Cost of Price Index.

Hughes said the company proposed a cost sharing program in which employees would pay up to 25 percent of their health insurance costs.

The amount employees pay as their share of the cost of health insurance would go up in the amount of each future wage increase, Hughes said.

The company proposed that a 10 percent night differential, which is paid in all departments except operator services, be frozen at the present amount. The company also proposed a four-day work week at 10 hours per day at the straight time rate.

Chamber to hear Mansour

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Mansour, who served for 12 years as president of Mercy College in Detroit, also attracted attention when she was an unsuccessful candidate in the Aug. 10, 1982, Democratic primary in the 17th Congressional District. She lost the race with 2,400 votes.

Mansour remains in the public eye through her many speaking engagements. But, it's not unusual for the office holder to be invited to make speeches

before large groups, according to a spokesperson.

Mansour will speak at the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce Oct. 13 at the Botsford Inn. The citizen of the year award also will be presented at the dinner.

"It'll be open to the public if we have room," Soronen said. "But we have just so much room at the Botsford and priority will be given Chamber members."

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