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Twenty-Five Cents

Old habits haunt library's future

Cost spiraling as support lags

EDITOR'S NOTE: At a recent Farmington Hills budget hearing, the debate over the use and funding of the community's library system was revived. This is the first in a series of stories about the library, its future and how neighboring systems are operated.

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Public libraries are places where "the modern citizen can secure reliable and disinterested advice on practical matters and where he is helped to get his bearings in the complexities of modern community life," according to an academic definition.

The first American public library was opened in Peterborough, N.H., in 1833 on the basis of an 1821 law which permitted a certain portion of the local taxes to be used for educational purposes.

Most library officials would agree with the stated purpose, and the method of financing has remained largely unchanged. But just how the

'The funding has remained stable or gone down, while the cost of books has risen 25 percent since 1980.'

— Gordon Lewis
library director

funds are handled has become a present-day issue at the Farmington Community Library.

Library officials claim they're not getting all the money they're entitled to from the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, which collect and disburse the tax money.

Furthermore, some local library people say they'd like to "go autonomous" — that is control their own finances as a separate taxing authority responsible for their own millage.

Some city officials and councilmen discourage the plan.

For the library to achieve autonomy, voters in Farmington and Farmington Hills would have to approve both the proposition for independence and the millage required to run the libraries.

Such a plan was voted down in Farmington in a 1976 election.

FARMINGTON'S PUBLIC library, described as "very heavily used" by Director Gordon Lewis, checks out more than half a million materials a year.

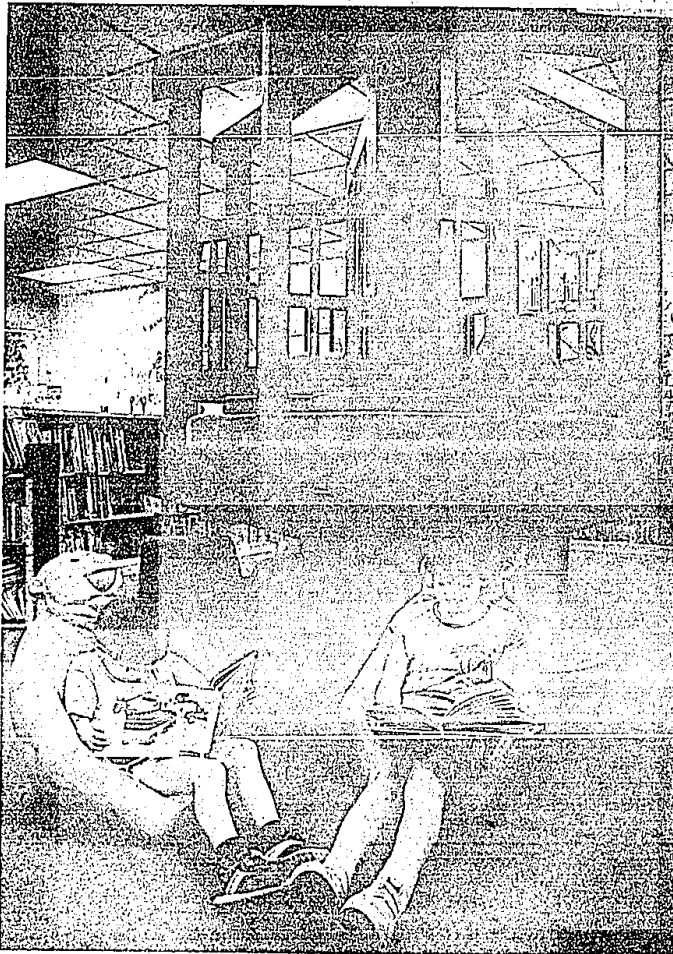
"In addition, we conducted a survey which showed that more than 400,000 books were used in the library itself," Lewis said. "Some 217,000 reference questions were answered, and more than 500 community meetings were held in the library with 23,000 people participating."

The library is one of six projects funded jointly by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills. It has a "total recommended budget" of \$1,122,050. The lion's share — \$949,917 — comes from larger, more populous Farmington Hills.

To get the work done, the library has a full-time staff of 30 to go with about 30 students who work part time.

The library relies heavily on volunteers.

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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Relaxing in the Farmington Community Library children's section are Darcolo Bulika and brother Bradley. In recent years libraries have branched out into a variety of activities.

Separate millage debated

By Tom Baer
staff writer

In this corner . . . the library, which would like total control over its finances. In that corner . . . the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, which would like to continue to have a huge say in the library's budget-making.

That's how things seem to be shaping up in the debate over how the Farmington Community Library is financed. Jim Wibby, a trustee on the four-member Library Board, shares Library Director Gordon Lewis' concern about the facility getting less than its share of the tax pie.

"The problem in Farmington — and the point we've been trying to get across to the councils — is that the people by vote, back when it (Farmington Hills) was a township, gave us one mill for operating," Wibby said.

"Each year we're running 93 percent or 98 percent, but we never seem to get the full one mill we're supposed to get."

Explaining their budgeting process, Wibby said that each year the library staff puts together the budget, which is given to the library board for review and approval.

THE BUDGET then goes to the city managers who "work it over as they do with the budgets of all departments in the cities," according to Wibby. Then comes a joint conference involving city managers and library people.

"We go over what we're doing or not doing," Wibby said. "In the past few years, there's generally been downward adjustments made in our requested budgets."

The budget then is presented to a joint session of the city councils, which listen to explanations and eventually vote on it.

At a public hearing on the budget this month, Farmington Hills Mayor Charles Williams proposed cutting \$18,000 from the library budget and shifting it to the Police Department. That plan was subsequently scratched, but the library still receives less than the authorized one mill, Wibby said.

The shortfall this year will be about \$3,000, or about three percent of the total budget, according to one source.

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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Gordon Lewis, the district director, is finding himself increasingly having to explain the new roles being taken on by the library system.

Court ruling throws districts into disarray

Because of a recent Michigan Supreme Court decision, Farmington's State Rep. Sandy Brotherton has found himself representing a shade different constituency this week.

Tuesday's Supreme Court decision declaring the 1983 state legislative dis-

tricts unconstitutional has thrown candidates and elections officials into a quandary.

Although Farmington and Farmington Hills remain in Brotherton's district, he loses his recently acquired

Novi constituency and picks up Southfield Township.

But the decision causes problems which go beyond which elected official represents whom.

"We're very concerned about our ability to print absentee voter ballots timely enough," said Howard Altman, Oakland County elections director. "There is no margin for error. If we make an error, it is very costly in terms of dollars and court costs."

The court set a new July 10 deadline for candidates to file nominating petitions for state House of Representatives seats. Brotherton and Democrat Vicki Barrett of Farmington Hills apparently will have to file again for ballot spots.

Candidates for U.S. Congress and Oakland County Commission are unaffected. State Senate elections aren't scheduled until 1986.

RULING UNANIMOUSLY, the high court gave the Legislature a chance to reapportion itself — if it acted almost immediately. Otherwise, the "Apoll plan" used in the 1982 election would go back into effect.

But key lawmakers doubted the Legislature is in any mood to reappportion itself.

"Politically, that's not possible," said Senate Minority Leader William Faust, D-Westland. He noted that since the legislative plan was adopted in Decem-

ber, Republicans have taken control of the Senate due to the recall of two Democrats.

"They (Republicans) don't want to reapp anything. They didn't want it to begin with. They want the Apoll plan," Faust said. He said the Apoll plan would give Republicans good chance to win 20 to 24 Senate seats, although House Republicans wouldn't necessarily be helped much.

SEN. RUDY Nichols, R-Waterford, who was elected this year to replace one of the recalled Democrats, agreed. As a state representative last year, Nichols voted against the 1983 legislative reapportionment plan.

"I would have to see what the new plan is like, but I would probably lean against it," said Nichols, a key vote now that the GOP has 20-18 control of the Senate.

Here is the background: After the 1980 census, the state Supreme Court declared the state Apoll plan unconstitutional. The court abolished freedom of both sides. The director, Bernard Apoll, drafted a new plan.

Apoll's drawing up a plan that tended to follow community and county lines but which left population variances between districts of as much as 20 percent. The Supreme Court adopted Apoll's plan for the 1982 election but

told the Legislature it could reapportion itself.

The Legislature did so, passing House Bill 4481 by narrow votes in December. Districts are more nearly equal in size, but many new cross community and county lines which Republicans call "gerrymandering."

BUT OAKLAND Circuit Judge George LaPlata earlier this month declared the legislative plan unconstitutional.

ional on technical grounds. He found the Legislature had gutted HB 4481, substituting new language but keeping the old title.

The Supreme Court agreed, pointing to a sentence in the Michigan Constitution which says, "No bill shall be altered, or amended, on its passage through either house so as to change its original purpose as determined by the

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oral quarrel

Comments on Pope's latest views on sex

Speaking before the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland, Pope John Paul II denounced "pleasure-oriented sexual relations for both married and unmarried couples."

The Pope also reiterated his support of traditional family values and stressed his stand against abortion and euthanasia, the act of killing a person painlessly for reasons of mercy.

In Switzerland, the Pope's conservatism was criticized by both

Protestants and liberal Catholics, according to press accounts.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

WHAT COMMENTS WOULD YOU MAKE ON THE POPE'S VIEWS ON "PLEASURE-ORIENTED SEXUAL RELATIONS?"

To answer this question, call 477-6458 anytime before 1 p.m. on Friday, June 22. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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