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Twenty-five cents

Scouting volunteers hit with lawsuit

By Tom Daer
staff writer

Some area Girl Scout leaders would like a slight addition to the organization's well-known motto.

"Be prepared" scouts have been advised for decades. But these days three volunteer leaders of Farmington Hills Brownie Troop 3271 might prefer "Be prepared . . . to fight some legal battles."

The three — Carolyn Cole, Virginia Crockett and Susan Whitten — were named as defendants along with the Girl Scouts of America, Michigan Metro Council Inc. in a lawsuit stemming from an injury suffered by one of their charges at a Brownie troop meeting almost two years ago.

The suit, filed March 23 in Wayne County Circuit Court, says that "improper supervision resulting in hor-

replay getting out of hand" led to the loss of a pen into the right eye of a 9-year-old girl at a troop meeting at Farmington Hills' Kenbrook Elementary School on Nov. 4, 1982.

The pen was thrown by another member of the troop, according to the suit.

The injured girl, who spent eight days in the hospital, lost the lens in her right eye and faces "a lifetime use of prosthetic devices, including contact lenses," according to the suit, brought by the girl's parents.

The suit asks judgment " . . . in whatever amount in excess of Ten Thousand (\$10,000.00) Dollars, will fully and fairly compensate her for her damages and injuries sustained."

Girl Scout leaders, both locally and at the metropolitan headquarters in

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— Girl Scout volunteer leader

downtown Detroit, were reluctant to discuss the matter because of the pending litigation.

BUT SOME area scouting activities have been curtailed until crucial legal and insurance questions have been answered.

Programs at Brownie Troop 3146,

which meets at Wooddale Elementary School, have been "put on hold until everybody gets their acts together and figures out if there or is there not coverage," said a volunteer who wished to remain anonymous.

Privately, some area leaders have said they're worried about not receiving legal support from the Girl Scouts

and the insurance companies if they're named as defendants in lawsuits.

"You're doing something out of the goodness of your heart," said a leader. "But are you also opening up your whole livelihood?"

Penny Butler, executive director of the Girl Scouts' Michigan Metro Council, wouldn't talk about the incident or the lawsuit.

"It's a private matter and I won't discuss it," Butler said. "I mean, if you were involved, would you want me to talk about it? We have a policy with an insurance company. They're handling it."

Girls Scouts have liability coverage with the Girl Insurance Co. with a \$500,000 limit, according to a "Statement of Facts" which accompanies the suit.

The statement also indicated that the

injured girl's parents have no medical insurance.

"We're in the process of settling (this case) now," said Tom Upchurch of Home Insurance.

THE INCIDENT and resulting lawsuit have left Mary Glachino, a Farmington Hills mother and Neighborhood Service Director of area Girl Scout activities, disillusioned about the scouting hierarchy.

"I intend to resign," said Glachino, who supervised the three defendants. "I can't afford the risk."

She continued, "Girl Scout leaders, during their training, are told that if anything happens, as long as you've been trained and you follow Girl Scout procedures and so on, you don't have

Please turn to Page 6

Schools' fate under Choice is pondered

By Tom Daer
staff writer

It's not that William Prisk, assistant superintendent for finances and services in the Farmington School District, necessarily opposes the Voter's Choice Amendment (Proposal C on the Nov. 6 ballot), another in a long line of tax-lessening, government-taming plans.

It's just that he claims he doesn't understand the measure — and the effect it might have on the \$46-million school district he helps run.

"Do you remember the turmoil that existed after the Headlee Amendment (another tax-saving scheme which voters approved in 1978) passed?" asked Prisk. "Everybody asked, 'Now that it's passed, what does it mean?'"

"The same circumstances exist right now."

Voter's Choice — supported by grassroots organizations of disgruntled citizens as a way of "getting government off our backs and out of our pockets" — would chop the personal tax rate to 4.8 percent (the rate before Gov. James J. Blanchard's notorious 1983 tax hike) and leave future increases up to the voters.

Proposal C also calls for the rollback of recent increases in cigarette, gasoline and vehicle license taxes to 1981 levels. Municipal income taxes for non-residents would be set at 0.5 percent. Increases would be subject to voter approval.

A four-fifths vote of the Legislature could raise the license and other fees otherwise regulated by the state.

AND PROPOSAL C would affect public school systems funds, both local taxes and state aid.

Like other legislative units, school districts would have to exist at December 1981 budget levels — unless the voters authorized additional funds.

Voter's Choice says that "we're not . . . to generate any more income than we could get from the 1981 tax base or tax levy," Prisk said. "It would

be very easy to understand it if said you had to roll back your millage rate to the 1981 levy."

"And that's what's confusing to me, and I'm sure I'm not alone."

Prisk and some other school men aren't sure if the proposal means the 1981 tax rate or tax base.

"If it means go back to the 1981 tax rate, we have no real problem," Prisk said. "But if it means go back to the tax base, then we have a problem."

"Things have changed in our school district in the past four years. Revenues have increased in the last four years. If we have to go back to the revenue of four years ago, it will make a tremendous impact on the school district."

As of Dec. 31, 1981, the Farmington District levied 33.25 mills, which produced \$33,507,900 in general fund revenues, according to R. Scott Bacon, Prisk's administrative assistant.

Today, the district levies 33 mills, producing \$33,000,000 in general funds. The state equalized valuation of the district has increased.

IF VOTER'S Choice passes, the district may have to ask voters for permission to increase the tax, school officials have said.

"We'd have to ask the voters to raise the tax from whatever that '81 revenue rate would have been to what we would need today," Prisk said. "In the meantime, we've had two elections renegeing rates. We have had truth-in-taxation hearings. We have had budget hearings."

"We've done all these things to be sure the taxpayers of the Farmington Public School District know exactly what the district is spending and what it needs to raise in local revenues to pay its bills."

Prisk added that "a greater concern" was the proposal's effect on state aid to public education, even though Farmington receives little from that source.

"Certainly, it'll mean a great reduction in the revenues the state has," he said. "The state won't be able to do the

Please turn to Page 12



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Stormy

Jerry Potter (left) and Mark Flower (right) of Farmington High School put the squeeze on Plymouth Salem's Mark Flower. The two teams

battled it out under stormy skies. For the full story, please turn to today's sports section.

Voters approve renewal

Voters in the Farmington School District Tuesday passed a four-mill tax renewal, which will provide the district with \$4.5 million of its \$46-million budget.

The renewal passed, 655 votes to 230. Only 901 ballots were cast in a district which contains approximately 58,000 voters.

"It's a very slim turnout, but we don't look on that as apathy at all," said Graham Lewis, assistant superintendent in the district. "We feel there's an element of satisfaction in the community when we can get numbers like this."

Lewis added that the millage success keeps the district "on a good financial footing" for the future.

The Farmington School District includes Farmington, most of Farmington Hills and a tiny portion of West Bloomfield Township.

The millage proposal passed in all four of the district's precincts.

In precinct No. 1 at the Farmington Training Center in downtown Farmington, the vote was 301 yes to 60 no. The yes votes outnumbered the no votes, 281-77, at precinct No. 2 at Dunckel Middle School on 12 Mile road.

The slimmest turnout was recorded in precinct No. 3 at Warner Middle School on 14 Mile Road. The yes votes won out, 32 to 28. Precinct No. 4, headquartered in East Middle School on Middlebelt Road north of 10 Mile, also opted for the renewal, 134 votes to 44.

Some 52 absentee ballots were cast, and 27 of them were yes votes.

In an election about a year ago, a proposal to renew five mills worth about \$5 million passed 833-454. The annual school board election last June drew only 1,841.

oral quarrel

Will lawsuit scare scout volunteers?

Three Farmington-area Girl Scout leaders have been named defendants, along with the metropolitan Detroit Girl Scout organization, in a lawsuit arising from a serious eye injury suffered by a 9-year-old girl during a Brownie troop meeting they were supervising.

The 9-year-old was accidentally poked in the eye by another youngster.

Some volunteer leaders have expressed concern about being held li-

ble if accidents happen to the children they're tending.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

Will the lawsuit against the Girl Scout leaders deter others from volunteering to help the Scouts?

To answer this question, call 477-5488 anytime before 11 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 28. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

what's inside

Amusements	9-14C
Business	7-8C
Cable Connection	17A
Classifieds . Sections C-D-E	
Community Calendar	6B
Club Circuit	6B
Creative Living	1-5E
Crossword Puzzle	5E
Editorial page	18A
Memory Lane	2A
Obituaries	2A
Recreation News	8A
Sports	1-5C
Suburban Life	1-8B
Travel	6C
NEWSLINE	477-5488
CLASSIFIEDS	691-0800
HOME DELIVERY	691-0800

Reminder...

Your Observer carrier will be stopping by this week, to collect for the month. Please have the money ready and be sure to get your receipt.

It's worth a \$1.75 discount on the next classified advertisement you place in your hometown newspaper.

Hills contributes funds for 12 Mile

By Joanne McElroy
staff writer

In another step in the planned widening of 12 Mile, Farmington Hills officials agreed this week to pay an estimated \$15,000 to obtain the rights-of-way along the thoroughfare.

The estimated cost of rights-of-way acquisition is about \$150,000. The

through a matching grant, the federal government will pay the remaining \$135,000, said City Manager William Costick.

late fall or early winter," said City Manager William Costick.

The process involves buying the rights-of-way, title searches and appraisals.

The proposed improvement call for widening the Oakland County-owned road from about 1,000 feet east of Orchard Lake Road to just west of Farmington Road, said City Engineer David Clark.

The improvements will be widened to five lanes — two lanes going each way and a turn lane in the middle.

THIS PLAN differs somewhat from

Please turn to Page 6