

Farmington DDA levies tax on businesses

Continued from Page 1

The TIFA would provide major funding for capital improvements if approved.

THE CITY and DDA board will use the most "conservative procedure," one which will allow the public notice, according to city administrative assistant Robert Schultz.

"If the TIFA is adopted, council would act on this (2 mill) as a companion package," City Manager and DDA board member Robert Deadman said. "As a practical thing and as a strategy . . . putting it through as a companion package makes sense."

Deadman advised the board to be

ready to defend the 2-mill levy and the entire downtown plan because there may be some attending the public hearing who oppose it.

Board member Frank Clappison questioned the strategy for linking the 2-mill levy to the TIFA proposal. "It today have an adverse effect on the project," he said. "If something went wrong with the TIFA, I hate to see this go down with it. We will need this tax, whatever happens."

When state law was passed allowing formation of DDAs, the 2-mill tax could be used only for planning and consulting, engineering studies and other preliminary work. Legislation amending these uses was passed in 1986, allowing a DDA board more flexibility for use of the money.

A TIFA would finance \$1.2 million of the \$1.44 million plan for the 64-acre DDA district. Tax increment revenues are based on "captured assessed values." They capture increased assessed values from the time the area's latest assessment roll was equalized. The Farmington TIFA would begin Jan. 1, 1987, running through Dec. 31, 1993. It would capture 100 percent of the levied tax increases in the DDA district.

If the TIFA plan is adopted, work on the first phase of the project could start as early as next spring, officials estimate.

If the city council adopts the TIFA, the DDA would see its initial money during July tax collections — the same time the 2-mill levy would

be collected, according to Deadman. The downtown plan will bring pedestrian lighting, new sidewalks and additional landscaping to the DDA district. Upon completion, the project will include 160 trees, 108 lights, two proposed crosswalks on

Grand River and Farmington Road and other amenities, including shielded trash compactors and decorative trash receptacles.

The DDA project is attempting to create a quality, small-town environment for Farmington, according

to the group's goals. Steering committees in the areas of beautification, communications, consumer issues and service-related issues remain in place as study groups for various parts of the project. Each is chaired by a DDA board member.

Police oppose higher speeds

Continued from Page 1

limit on major interstate highways.

Though it might appear that everybody seems to be driving faster these days, "what you see isn't necessarily what is happening," said Ralph Swan, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) supervisor of the traffic studies unit. MDOT Director James Pitz has publicly supported increasing the limit on rural freeways.

Admittedly, "speeds have increased slightly or gradually over a period of years" Swan said. In 1985, the average speed on urban interstate highways, such as I-75, was 61.8 mph. On other urban freeways, such as M-59, the average speed was 59.5 mph.

IN THE past four years, Michigan has had a 55 mph compliance rate of 48.5-49.8 percent — dangerously close to the federal maximum non-compliance rate. This rate is used to determine whether a state will receive its share of federal highway dollars, Swan said.

"The implication is that at 50 percent a state will lose their money. In

Michigan, we have been very close but we have not exceeded the limit," Swan said.

Though many are exceeding the limit today, that doesn't mean the 55 mph law should be changed, Cranston said.

Increasing the limit to 65 mph means motorists will simply kick the accelerator up to 60-70 mph — especially those drivers who are comfortable at higher speeds, Cranston added.

Brotherton, on the other hand, believes that if motorists are naturally traveling at a higher speed — and doing it safely — the law should be changed. "I think we should do it on the major interstates," he said, adding that today's highways are built for higher speeds.

The veteran legislator also argues that the original purpose of enacting the 1974 law — as a means of conserving gasoline — no longer exists and consequently neither should the law. "The 55 mph limit no longer serves the purpose. If the reason no longer exists for the law, repeal it," he added.

BROTHERTON ALSO maintains

that if the 55 mph limit isn't going to be thoroughly enforced, the law should be changed. Anyway, he said, there is an unwritten policy that most police do not ticket motorists who are traveling a few miles over the limit.

But police say they are enforcing as best as they can with the patrol forces they have. Because enforcement is costly, Cranston believes that speed limit compliance must be, to a large extent, voluntary.

The problem with voluntary compliance, however, is that the public is bombarded with messages that say there's no need for slower speeds. The best example of such a message is auto company ads for "muscle cars," which will reach a certain speed within so many minutes. "You never see ads that say muscle cars can get you to 55 mph," Cranston said.

Increasingly, cars are again being built and advertised for speed. That, coupled with today's inexpensive gasoline, are "signs to the public that there is no need for slow driving. The public just lacks the perception for the need (for safe, slower speeds)," Cranston said.

School officials discuss tuition policy

Continued from Page 1

allowing anyone to fill out an 120 form — under proper circumstances — and reside in the United States for an education, officials said. The district has two 120 students this year, Lewis said.

"We have turned away dozens and dozens of people," Deputy Superintendent Michael Flanagan told the board. "who wanted to be accepted either on a tuition or non-tuition basis. Don't underestimate the potential problem with fooling around with the tuition policy."

Trustee John Cotton said, "We're getting ourselves into a very judgmental situation. I'd just as soon we didn't place the school board or administration in a position to have to make judgments."

Another point was raised by Trustee R. Jack Isch, who said, "I have a little difficulty with this. What makes a Canadian student different than someone living in the UP (Upper Peninsula of Michigan)? This is a

question about being consistent in our attitudes."

The school board's policy committee plans to hold another meeting to continue discussion of the tuition policy.

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