

# County-held money ticketed for roads

By Casey Hana  
staff writer

About \$5 million in excess property tax money, held in escrow by Oakland County since 1982, will be returned to local communities for road repairs. But the money carries special stipulations for its use.

On Nov. 2, Farmington City Council members discussed possible uses for their portion of the money, which

totals \$53,000. Several joint projects with the city of Farmington Hills, including improvement of the Nine Mile/Farmington Road intersection, were discussed.

According to guidelines from the county, the money must be spent on a major street, county primary or millage road; it must be a project that has not yet been budgeted and the project must be identified and presented to the county by December

11, 1988.

The county will allow communities to supplement the project with local funds and enter into agreements with adjacent communities or the county to make the improvements.

**GUIDELINES FOR** using the money were shared with Oakland County cities nearly two years after county commissioners decided to re-

turn the money for local use. How to return the money to local communities, legally, was a problem that apparently took time.

The money was collected by the county in 1982 when the Michigan Tax Commission required assessed valuations of Oakland County property be increased by 6 percent. The county appealed the decision and won, allowing them to keep the money. In November 1985, they decided

to return it to local governments.

Legal advisers for the county commission said the money could not be directly returned and suggested the board appropriate the dollars through the Oakland County Road Commission, for road improvements.

Local communities will receive an allocation based on the county's State Equalized Valuation formula, according to Farmington city man-

ger Robert Deadman, who gave a report on the money to the city council Monday.

**DEADMAN SAID** he has had "very tentative discussions" with Farmington Hills administration on several projects that would benefit both cities.

"It would appear . . . that the highest priority should be allocated to Nine Mile Road Improvements," Deadman said. "Traffic volumes at this intersection have substantially increased in the past few years and will continue to increase in future years as development occurs to the west along the Nine Mile Road corridor."

Other projects being discussed include an overlay and repair of Drake Road, between Grand River and Freedom, and an overlay of Freedom Road, from Nine Mile to the western city limits.

With discussion, and no official vote, council members gave Deadman authority to proceed with discussions with Farmington Hills on the projects. "My personal priority would be Nine Mile, then Drake," councilman Arnold Campbell said.

Councilman Ralph Yoder added: "I have no problem with Farmington and Nine Mile. It would be a good expenditure of the money."

Deadman said he had no cost estimates for any of the projects. They will all require engineering work and study, he said.

# City authorizes capital purchase fund

By Casey Hana  
staff writer

Money shown as a designated general fund surplus for the city of Farmington will be moved into a Capital Improvement Fund for large purchases and commitments.

A total of \$400,000 committed as a loan to the city's Downtown Development Authority and \$300,000 for future Orchard Lake Road improvements will initially be moved into the special revenue fund no later than June 1988, according to action taken Nov. 2 by the city council.

The money was previously designated for special projects, but was held within the general fund.

The city had a \$1.36 million general fund surplus as of last June, according to most recent financial reports. Only \$137,300 is listed as undesignated.

Money will not be transferred into the new fund immediately, because interest from it is budgeted to balance the general fund for the current fiscal year, city manager Robert Deadman explained.

**ESTABLISHING THE** Capital Improvement Fund was one of three actions taken by the council Nov. 2, at the request of city auditors Plante & Moran. Other accounting changes included establishment of a Retired Employees Health Benefit Reserve Fund and changes in accounting for special assessments.

These funds are designed to allow better financial reporting, and to ease the burden on the city of financing future improvements and benefits that will be required, Deadman said in his report.

Major pieces of equipment with a replacement value of more than

\$100,000 each, periodically need replacing, Deadman explained. "It is prudent to set aside funds each year anticipating the future replacement of this equipment," he added.

A TOTAL of \$60,000 will be moved into the new Retired Employees' Health Benefit Reserve Fund. Deadman explained that future taxpayers should not be required to foot the bill for retiring city workers.

"There will be a time not too far down the road, when there will be more retired employees than those on the active payroll," he said. "This could be a substantial burden and a substantial number of people."

City estimates show that in the next 10-15 years, the number of re-

tired and active employees will be equal.

"This could, in fact, have a tremendous impact on our budget," city council member Richard Tupper said. "It is prudent to begin funding these expected costs now . . . reducing the future financial burden on the community," Deadman added.

The third change in city accounting procedures involves the city's Special Assessment Fund, which will be eliminated, with assessments being recorded in the Debt and Capital Construction funds.

The change is being made because of requirements deemed necessary by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, affecting accounting procedures in all cities.

# Residents petition for roads

Residents in Farmington's Bel Aire subdivision will circulate petitions asking neighbors to approve a special assessment district for having the streets replaced and repaired.

Two residents appeared before the city council Nov. 2 with a petition from 111 residents complaining about the Lee Lane/Orchard Lake intersection, which is barely drivable, they said.

Several residents cars have been damaged by the condition of the intersection, they said.

The two also complained about the state of all the neighborhood streets, which are filled with potholes.

City officials said they will do what maintenance is possible to repair the intersection before winter begins.

But full replacement of streets

would have to be handled under the city's shared, special assessment program where residents would be assessed a portion of the cost. The residents must get the signatures, then public hearings are held before an assessment district can be set up.

"The people on that petition would like to see something done before

somebody gets hurt," one resident said.

"If it's unsafe, we'll try to make it safe," city manager Robert Deadman said. "Without question, it's got to be made safe."

The Bel Aire subdivision is west of Orchard Lake Road, south of 10 Mile.

# Variance rules detailed

Farmington residents who live within 100 feet of property where a fence variance is requested will be notified so they can discuss the matter at a public meeting.

The Farmington City Council passed such a resolution Nov. 2, ensuring that neighbors have an ade-

quate say in any fence variance considered in the city.

The issue was raised several months ago by councilman Richard Tupper, who was concerned about the issues of sign and fence variance requests, which both come before the city council.



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