

# Talk radio lures broadcaster

## Schools' '89 budget may be up \$8 million

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systems are also expected to increase by \$30,000.

• New laws affecting underground storage tanks are expected to cost the district \$50,000.

• A "wellness and recognition" program for employees is being proposed that would cost \$30,000.

One non-budgeted item, removing small amounts of asbestos from district buildings as per federal law, will cost \$81,000, Flanagan added.

ON A positive note, the board is being asked to consider one new position — a technician to repair copiers, computer systems and other

items that could save the district \$60,000.

Flanagan said his staff scrambled to complete the 1988-89 budget so trustees could consider it before budget and Truth in Taxation hearings, both scheduled for May 17. The budget must be adopted before the first Monday in June.

Because cities and townships are just finalizing property valuations, the timing makes it difficult for the district to compile its needed information.

"We barely are able to get together SEV (state equalized valuation) information," he said. "It's a very, very tight timeline."

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"Don was our choice for host because of his wealth of experience. He's done everything there is to do in radio. His on-air style can be comfortable and yet challenging," Kizer said.

"My gut feeling was that he was the best one to do it. And besides, he lives a mile and a half away from me in Farmington Hills, so he's always around if I need him," Kizer said.

LAST MONDAY morning, Watson was in the station's Southfield studio developing stories on the weekend rabies outbreak in Michigan's thumb area and the controversy surrounding drug testing in the Detroit police department, which has led to the firing of several rookie officers.

The focus is on those events with significant impact on people's lives — the topical stories of the day," he said. "Last week (April 25-29), we talked to people in Hawaii about the plane that tipped apart."

"Next week (May 2-6), we'll be at the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) convention at Cobo Hall. We hope to talk with the guest speakers and AARP representatives," he said.

Four weeks ago, a five-person crew went to Israel "to find out how that country is continuing to exist with the IDF and Palestinian confrontations we'll hear about."

"We talked to a lot of people about that ongoing story and found out Israel has lots of other things going on."

Calling the Republican National Convention "a foregone conclusion with George Bush," Watson said the

*'So much of being a newscaster is out of your hands. When you're doing interviews, much of it is being produced as it goes on the air.'*

— Don Watson

show will skip it but plans to cover the Democratic National Convention firsthand.

"Beyond that, we have no plans. We leave it open," he said.

WATSON CAME to Detroit from New York in late 1983. He spent a couple of years doing the newscasts on J.P. McCarthy's morning show on WJR.

"So much of being a newscaster is out of your hands," he said. "When you're doing interviews, much of it is being produced as it goes on the air. The difference is like the 'Today' show compared to the evening news with Tom Brokaw. The 'Today' show is more like an ongoing production."

"We can change the scope of the program to be more topical."

Watson also enjoys the feedback — pro and con — of talk radio. It was something he missed as a broadcaster for NBC in New York.

"With network newscasts, there's so little feedback. Before computers in New York, the producer handed you (news) wire material and you wrote your newscast on an old Remington typewriter. There was one table and one microphone in the studio. There was nothing glamorous about it."

"With local radio, there's a constant stream of feedback. Even if it's critical in nature, it's nice to have that feedback."

Although the show doesn't take on-air callers, Watson enjoys chatting with listeners and receiving mail.

Generating a recent flurry of feedback two weeks ago was a phone interview with Richard Nixon talking about U.S. foreign policy and the coming presidential election. The former president was in town for an Economic Club of Detroit luncheon keynote address at Cobo Hall.

While the speech was broadcast live on WJR, WWJ was the only radio station to follow up with an interview.

WATSON HAS interviewed four presidents. Besides Nixon, they include Gerald Ford (who accorded him two hours in the Oval Office), Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

A native of Chicago, Watson began his career at a 250-watt radio station in Tucson right out of high school. He earned a degree from Arizona State University while working at another station in Phoenix.

"I knew I had found my niche," he said.

Stints followed in Houston, Chicago, Indianapolis and New York, from disc jockey to general manager in various markets.

"You don't generally find vertical mobility in one market," he said.

His wife's career has added to the

moves — the family transferred from Indianapolis to New York when she received a promotion. Margaret Childs-Watson is an executive with Chrysler Corp. The couple has a daughter, Courtney, a junior at Farmington Hills Harrison High School.

"The school was one of the reasons for locating in the area," said Watson, adding that his daughter is a member of the National Honor Society.

"We like Harrison, it's a good school that pays attention to the needs of students."

The family also includes three dogs — two Australian shepherds and a cocker spaniel.

WHEN HE'S not working, Watson enjoys running (four to five miles a day in the neighborhood), sailing and putting around the house.

"I'm also a ham radio operator. I began in my early high school years," he said.

He's glad to be part of the Detroit radio scene.

"Detroit has a great history in the market. With New York and Chicago, it's one of the top."

"For anyone who listened to radio over age 35, the Lone Ranger, Green Hornet and Sgt. Preston of the Yukon came out of Detroit," he said.

"Mike Wallace was here. (Windsor's) CKLW in the '60s was an absolute powerhouse. And WWJ was the first commercial radio station ever."

"Now, there is such great diversion. Every kind of radio is available — religious, oldies, news talk, music from classical to the hardest rock."

"There's infinite variety."

## Center wants financial help

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"It doesn't help pay (Detroit) Edison bills or keep programming costs down," she said.

As a nonprofit organization, it's unrealistic to expect the center will soon reach a point where financing is no longer a worry, said Jan Dolan, Farmington Hills city councilwoman and executive board president.

"We need \$200,000 annually to operate," she said.

Dolan is hoping Marks' one-man fund-raiser will serve as a catalyst for the community to recognize the center's financial needs and match the amounts brought in by the city councilman.

When financial problems were announced last year, the executive board was given permission by the center's membership to dip into the longstanding Angel Trust Fund. Platt confirmed that since then, the fund has been used to offset the operating budget deficit.

ating budget deficit.

PPAFF PLANS, however, to bring that financing method to an end when the annual fund-raiser draws to a close in mid-June. Work continues on encouraging corporations to sponsor programs, such as the outdoor concerts, Dolan said.

A suggestion in the center's \$18,000 study, conducted by Plante & Moran CPAs, Southfield, was to provide for a stable financing mechanism that can be relied on year after year, Dolan said. Corporate support of particular programs and events is an example.

Strong community financial support also will alleviate the possibility that should the center fall financially, it would revert first to the Farmington Community Library, according to the facility's deed. If the library does not want the center, it would automatically revert to the city of Farmington Hills.

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