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Dispute over model homes, 2A

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To point or not to paint. Farmington High students are circulating petitions so they can "paint" the guardhouse booth in the school's east parking lot. A recent administrative directive, upheld by the school board, prohibits students from painting graffiti on the small building.

"It's an outlet for the students," student Christopher Jones told the school board May 3. He said it keeps students from doing damage to other school property.

The prohibition is part of Farmington High's new "Effective Schools" program, designed to sharpen the school's image.

LOTTERY complete. A lottery to select 306 students for Farmington Public Schools' new magnet school, Highmeadow Common Campus, is complete.

Letters are being sent to parents, advising them of student selection. A waiting list will be kept on file, said Mary Lou Ankole, assistant superintendent for special services.

Quote of the week

When I got those first negative biopsies, I cried. My heart — my spiritual heart — was full of gratitude.

Richard Headlee, Farmington Hills insurance executive, who undergoes regular biopsies on his new heart to determine whether there is any sign of rejection. He's had 18 biopsies so far.

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HOME GARDEN SPECIAL SECTION

SPECIAL SECTION IN TODAY'S ISSUE

Hills proposes tax-rate increase

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Farmington Hills officials say the city is facing a financial dilemma prompting them to propose a tax-rate increase of less than 0.5 mill in 1988-89.

"I don't know what I can do but deal with the facts," city manager William Costick said. "If we hadn't cut the tax rate last year, we wouldn't have a problem this year. Last year, we dropped taxes because we had revenue growth. Now we're in a completely different situation."

City administrators propose a 9.4 mill tax rate to support a \$24 million budget in 1988-89.

The proposed rate is an increase over the current 9.258 mills, which was a reduction from the 10.3 mill rate in 1986-87. The maximum amount allowed by city charter, excluding voter approved special taxes is 10 mills.

Excluding debt retirement, the proposed budget represents a 6.5 percent increase over the current year's budget.

THE AVERAGE taxpayer who owns a \$125,000 house, assessed at \$62,500, who paid \$575 in city taxes in the current fiscal year, would pay \$587 in the new fiscal year if the city council adopts the proposed budget at the June 13 meeting.

This figure does not include taxes levied by Farmington Public Schools, Oakland Intermediate School District, Oakland County and Oakland Community College.

The city is faced with a more than \$1 million revenue loss because of the lack of a surplus (\$580,000) to carry over into the

Departments get turned away in budget talks, 4A

new year, decreasing building permit fees (\$325,000) and the elimination of the federal shared revenues (\$112,000).

Increased costs, particularly in refuse disposal, general costs, such as police services, property assessment administration and employee health benefits, are further pinching the proposed budget, Costick said.

Increased property tax assessments averaging 12 percent with some as high as 20 percent, plus \$117 million in new construction, have pushed the city's state equalized value to \$1.7 billion from \$1.5 billion in 1987-88.

Under the state Truth-in-Taxation law, the city is required to roll back its tax rate to 8.6 mills, which would generate the same amount of money the city would have received if property tax assessments had risen at the same percentage as inflation.

BY LAW, city officials may increase the tax rate beyond the state-required rollback if the city advertises the increase. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Monday, June 6, to inform taxpayers of the proposed increase.

"If we roll back this year in light of the tax reduction last year, and in light of other revenue shortfalls and the increased costs of the city, we can't balance the budget at the (rolled back) 8.6-mill levy," Costick said.

The proposed 9.4-mill rate is a 9.2 percent increase over the 8.6-mill rollback,

said finance director Charles Rosch.

When the current budget year draws to a close on June 30, the city will be unable to follow past practice and use some of its year-end surplus to balance the budget. When the current budget year ends, the city will be without \$580,000 to carry over into the new budget, Costick said.

"We've always expended the end-of-the-year budget surplus to keep the tax rate low. But we've been eliminating any looseness in the budget. We've gotten more accurate. Budgets have gotten tighter," Costick said.

In previous years, the city had a surplus because more revenue was generated than was expected or budgeted. That surplus was used the next year to help balance the budget.

"Revenues are not coming in excessively over what we project," Rosch said. "We literally are not going to end up with a surplus."

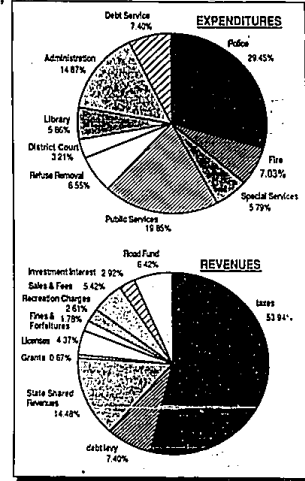
THE TOTAL general fund balance is expected to drop to \$1.7 million, which is about 7.2 percent of the city's proposed \$24 million budget. Financial analysts recommend that municipalities maintain a budget surplus equal to 10 percent of the city's operating budget.

"We really can't afford to let it get any lower to maintain our bond rating," Rosch said.

Another factor causing a budgeting dilemma is the expected \$325,000 decrease in revenue from building fees.

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Farmington Hills budget '88-'89



Thankful, Richard Headlee returns

After heart transplant, it's 1 day at a time

By Casey Hans staff writer

It was with heartfelt thanks that Richard Headlee greeted home last week, returning to the helm at Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America in Farmington Hills.

The same old Headlee spirit still shows through, following an Oct. 8 heart transplant that offered him new hope for life and a new set of priorities for living it.

The 57-year-old Farmington Hills resident returned May 5 from Salt Lake City, Utah, where he underwent a four-hour heart transplant operation and lived while recuperating. He was busy greeting employees and getting back to business, although he's taking his time getting back into the routine.

It will take about one year for Headlee to return to the same physical shape he was in before the surgery, he said. He has lost about 10 pounds and was recently taken off steroid therapy, which made his joints sore.

Nonetheless, the former Michigan gubernatorial candidate is thankful to be back.



Richard Headlee pays for his lunch in the cafeteria at Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America. At left is cashier Sharon Richardson.

"I had a great attitude," said the father of nine and grandfather of 29, about his eight-month medical ordeal.

"I'm blessed with a positive outlook that everything turns out for the best."

"When I got those first negative biopsies, I cried. My heart — my spiritual heart — was full of gratitude."

"I'm a blessed man."

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Marks, Soronen, Sever top Hills conference spending

Answers elude city on merits of conferences, 8A

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Immediate past Farmington Hills Mayor Ben Marks, Mayor Jody Soronen and Mayor Pro Tem Terry Sever have spent the most so far in 1987-88 on city council conferences and seminars.

Of the council's annual \$8,400 budget, the council has spent more than \$6,059 as of the end of February. Marks, Soronen and Sever together have spent more than \$5,300.

The city covers expenses for council members' travel to and from a conference, travel at a conference, hotel, conference registration and meals.

The budget year ends June 30. "I think everyone on the council is pretty cost conscious. Nobody is interested in wasting the city's money," Soronen said.

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Numbers for emergencies are incorrect

Know who to call in an emergency.

The emergency-only telephone numbers listed in the May 1988-89 Farmington-Farmington Hills Neighborhood directory are transposed.

In Farmington, call 474-4700 for police and fire service. In Farmington Hills, call 477-0911. These numbers also were transposed in a Farmington Focus item that appeared Monday.

Phone stickers with emergency numbers are available at each police department.