

OCC candidates field millage question

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Candidates for the Oakland Community College board in today's election faced tough questions from the Troy Democratic Club on talk about a 1-mill increase in the property tax. Most answered they hadn't made up their minds before the proposal was still in the talking stage at the administrative level.

Polls are open until 8 p.m. today.

A TOTAL OF 13 candidates are seeking two posts. Lucius Theus, retired Air Force general from Bloomfield Township and civic worker, said he would

"thoroughly examine" OCC finances but so far was "not privy" to enough information to make up his mind. David Hackett, incumbent trustee from Rochester Hills, said, "The administration recommends, and the board makes the decisions. . . . We don't think we're getting our fair share of state aid." He said the state's portion of the two-year college's budget had dropped steadily from 40 percent to not much more than 20 percent in his 20-plus years on the board.

Gene Stanley, Pontiac businessman, said OCC accepts 3 percent of all Michigan public college students but gets less than 2 percent of the state appropriation. Stanley was

cool to talk of a millage increase. Marcia Van Crevel, real estate broker from Farmington Hills, opposed talk of a millage "when there is this deal on the table for \$2.4 million. . . ."

The college is in the process of selling off unused Auburn Hills Campus land to a developer on Squirrel Road. The sale is delayed pending zoning and road fund problems.

OCC LEVIES about 1.4 mills — 1 mill for operations and the rest for bond issue service. The bond portion is due to expire over the next four years.

Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson proposed during a special board session last month that the board think about asking voters to raise the overall tax rate, capping it at 2 mills (\$2 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation).

Candidate Michael Lewis of Walled Lake said OCC was getting too close with business in the Auburn Hills area, renewing charges that the city of Auburn Hills was "robbing" education through a tax increment

financing authority and using the money for roads to businesses.

Candidate Hurtlecune Hardaway, Shepherd, Pontiac city attorney, said the chancellor had talked to candidates about a proposal to sell property, but she took no position on the question.

Candidate Edith Gonzalez, a member of the Troy Board of Education made introductory remarks but left

before the question-and-answer session.

Not attending were candidates Richard Blonde of Rochester Hills, James Doyon of Madison Heights, David Meidman of Walled Lake, Thomas Nelson of Pontiac and Ben Pearlman of Birmingham.

Today's election is certain to see one new trustee join the board because incumbent Edward Pappas didn't seek re-election.

Composting

Cheap way to enrich the land

Fourth in series

By Nancy Smith
special writer

THE ancient art of composting has become a cost-effective choice in solid waste management. Removing organic matter from the waste stream and processing it into compost saves landfill space and creates a valuable end product.

And the good news — it will be easy to do. Our grass clippings, leaves and yard waste can be bagged simply swept to the curb. Composting need not involve costly, complicated systems. Nor does it pollute the land; it enriches it.

By the 1920s, large scale municipal composting plants were built in Europe and America.

further development.

Low cost, easy-to-apply petroleum-based fertilizers stole the show. Also, it was easier and cheaper to dump waste onto land or in the water.

In the near future, composting will be a major component in most solid waste plans. Why? It will cost less and pollute less than emission-controlled incinerators or properly sited and maintained landfills.

How does composting work? In years past, compost piles or pits were anaerobic — they used no oxygen to decompose the waste. Today an aerobic or oxygen-using process is used almost exclusively. Tiny organisms cause the bio-chemical breakdown of organic waste. This method is much faster and produces a sanitary, odor-free compost.

Heat-loving bacteria perform the first step, breaking down refuse by metabolism into humus at up to 105 degrees (Fahrenheit). The high temperature destroys pathogens and the larvae of harmful insects.

OTHER MICROORGANISMS then take over: Fungi and actinomy-

ces. They can only tolerate temperatures up to 80 degrees (Fahrenheit) and must live in the outer 2-3 inches of the pile. These helpers break down "tougher" materials such as cellulose.

Physical breakdown is caused by animals such as earthworms, sowbugs and millipedes. They loosen and aerate the compost by moving around and become food for other organisms when they die.

The end product: a light, dry material, usually dark brown or black. Compost is a natural, non-polluting substance that stimulates crop growth and produces luxuriant flower gardens and lawns.

Composting reduces the waste stream, and may be sold to defray disposal costs or used to improve public property.

Next article: Backyard and municipal composting — low tech to high tech.

Nancy Smith has been a member of Oakland County Solid Waste Planning Committee since 1978 and a Farmington Hills resident for 25 years.

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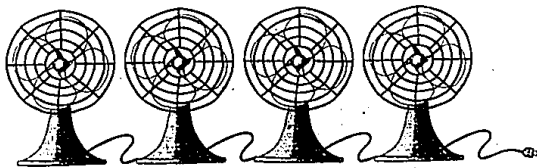
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