

Pending report to determine sewer rates

By Joanne Malazewski
staff writer

By summer's end, a report is expected to detail how much and when sewer rates will increase to help Farmington Hills pay the local share of the long-planned \$63 million in Evergreen-Farmington sanitary sewer improvements.

"Over the long haul, sewer fees will have to go up," city manager William Costick said at a public meeting June 20.

The question is how much and when. Farmington Hills and Southfield, which will benefit and pay the most for the sanitary sewer improvements, have been saving money to get a head start on financing construction. Farmington Hills has saved \$6 million and Southfield about \$12 million.

The estimated \$63 million price tag is an increase over an earlier estimate of \$48.4 million. "They (Michigan Department of Natural Resources) have gone back and changed items and included much more than other communities might have to do," Farmington Hills public

services director Thomas Biasell said.

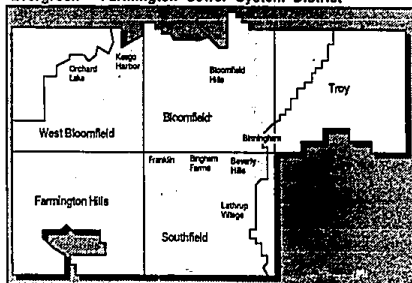
The cities are facing a late September deadline for certification of a grant through the federal Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act. If the cities are awarded the grant, \$19 million of the estimated \$63 million is eligible for federal financing, Biasell said.

THAT MEANS Farmington Hills' \$21.4 million local share would be reduced to \$13 million. The cities will have an estimated 20 years to pay off bonds that will be sold to help build improvements expected to be completed by mid-1991, he added.

Improvements will add capacity to the overburdened and inadequate sewage lines. Improvements will prevent sewage overflow spilling into basements and particularly the Rouge River, which is the reason for the EPA's interest and grant program.

A rate increase for both water and sewer effective July 1 in Farmington Hills is the result of increases from Detroit, which provides water and disposes and treats sanitary sewer wastes. Farmington Hills,

Evergreen - Farmington Sewer System District



however, also can increase rates for purposes such as paying for the federally mandated sanitary sewer improvements.

"We anticipate we won't have to do a whole lot (of rate adjusting) at

the beginning," Biasell said. "But it depends on the threshold of where we begin to increase. We're looking at a whole rate evaluation for both water and sewer."

The financial bottom line is that

"the entire district, Evergreen-Farmington, has to pay the tab for the improvements to the district."

BIASELL is optimistic that the Evergreen-Farmington district will receive grants by October. "I'm excited about it because we're actually going to do it. It's my honest belief that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is doing everything it can to make sure we're going to get the grant," Biasell said.

Evergreen-Farmington is running neck-in-neck with the North Huron Rouge Valley Wastewater Control System project as top priorities. Money apparently is available to finance both district projects, as well as a third project, the First Hamilton Line. All projects will add capacity to the major sewer lines taking waste to the Detroit Wastewater Plant.

The Evergreen-Farmington district is comprised of 16 communities. All the communities are being asked to sign orders of abatement detailing necessary improvements and agreement that they will be paid by the respective communities. Farmington Hills agreed to the or-

ders a week ago.

"Ultimately, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has the authority to require the improvements, even without the voluntary consent or grants," Biasell said.

Improvements to the Evergreen-Farmington district represents the city's commitment to cleaning up the heavily polluted Rouge River. Biasell said in May in response to a "worst case" scenario released by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

THE SEMCOG Rouge Remedial Action Plan estimates that under the "worst case" scenario, Farmington Hills would pay more than \$2 million annually and \$41.8 million over 20 years to help remove raw sewage and toxic pollutants from the river.

Farmington Hills ranked 14th on the list of 45 Oakland and Wayne county communities in order of how much they would have to pay. "That's why we're going after the Evergreen-Farmington. We are doing everything we possibly can to get it (federal grant). That is our response to the Rouge River cleanup," Biasell said in May.



LAURA CASTLE/staff photographer

Street sweep

Eighteen-year-old Dyan Oliver of Southfield began work last week for Farmington's Downtown Development Authority, as part of the annual Michigan Youth Corps program. Here, she sweeps a section around the downtown street improvements clean as part of the job. Oliver will work on various DDA projects throughout the summer.

\$1.2 million in repairs approved for schools

About \$1.4 million will be spent this summer for school building renovations throughout the Farmington district.

About one third of the General Fund purchases will be spread over two years for the district, which just approved a \$74 million budget for the new fiscal year beginning July 1.

The improvements, which range from roof renovations, to window treatments, to parking lot and gymnasium lighting, were approved June 21 by the school board. They include:

- horizontal blinds for Alameda Early Childhood Center, Beechview and Highmeadow elementary schools, Cloverdale Center and Harrison High School for \$21,750.

- vertical blinds for Longacre Elementary School for \$4,588.

- repair of heating equipment for

The improvements range from roof renovations to parking lot and gymnasium lighting.

Cloverdale Center for \$7,176.

- storage buildings at Alameda Early Childhood Center; Eagle, Flinders, Highmeadow, Beechview, Gill Longacre, William Grace, Wood Creek and Wooddale elementary schools; Shiawassee Center; Farmington Training Center; and Power Middle School for \$50,000.

- gymnasium and pool ceiling and lighting renovations at Harrison for \$80,857; at Farmington High

School for \$31,500; and at North Farmington High School for \$29,647.

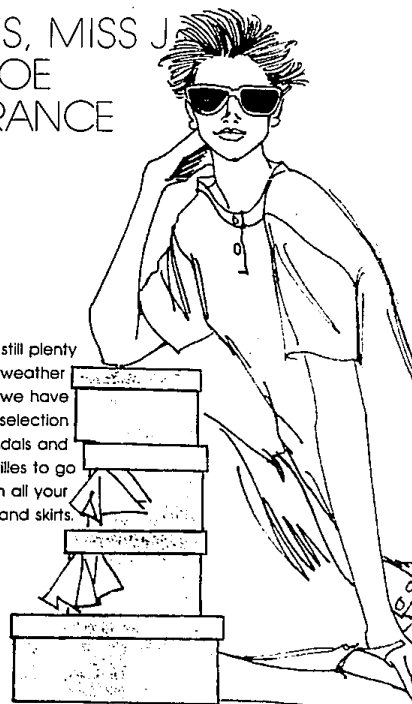
- A total of \$1.19 million in roof renovations: at Eagle for \$148,000; at Highmeadow for \$174,590; at Longacre for \$243,598; at O.E. Dunckel Middle School for \$243,300; at Warner Middle School for \$50,034; at Alameda for \$214,578; and at Ten Mile School for \$22,017.

School administrators did a districtwide survey two years ago, which determined there was more than \$10 million in needed building repairs and renovations throughout the district.

Since then, several million dollars has been earmarked for these improvements each year, as prioritized by building principals and supervisors.

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Chamber business survey reveals Festival support

The 24th annual Farmington/Farmington Hills Founders Festival should be an exciting and prosperous event, according to respondents of a survey of 70 retail businesses in downtown Farmington.

From the survey distributed by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, 43 respondents generally agreed that increased sales, fun, community spirit and a sense of pride in the city are the greatest attributes of the festival.

"I was pleased with the results," said Jody Soronen, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce and festival administrator. "The merchants seem to think that the festival is a positive thing for the communities. They feel they get visibility, increased sales and new customers. People appear to believe that it is a good thing for the chamber to be involved in, and I am pleased with that."

The festival, sponsored by the chamber, will take place July 10-16 and have various activities for all interests, including musical entertainment, arts and crafts displays, parades, dancing, a scholarship pageant and more.

"It takes a lot of work to put the festival on," Soronen said. "We do it for the merchants. We do it for the general public. With the number of people who have attended the festival, we can assume that it has been a pleasant

experience."

OF THOSE responding to the survey, 96 percent agreed that the festival promotes a positive image of the community. Special sales promotions are conducted during the festival by 77 percent of the businesses, and over half stated that sales increase during festival week.

"It is heartening to know that the retail merchants are benefiting, enjoying it and supportive of it," Soronen said.

Complaints about festival proceedings in the survey focused on a lack of parking and bathrooms, but the chamber has begun to rectify those problems. A few additional parking spots will be available in the recently repaved city lot, on the north side of Grand River, and parking will also be available in the Village Commons Center, which opened last year. Soronen said the lack of bathrooms should be corrected by several additional portable toilets, which have been ordered and will be placed in local parking lots.

According to Soronen, as one of the many events offered at the festival, arts and crafts shows are a big draw. She said the merchandise is not found in stores, and the chamber requires that only handmade goods are sold, ensuring quality products.