

Hills studying lower tax rate to offset SEV

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

It's not exactly a promise. But Farmington Hills officials are trying to tow the line and not take advantage of the average 10 percent increase in property tax assessments this year.

"With the growth we've had, I think we should be able to meet that goal," City Manager William Costick said.

For the homeowner, that means if property values increase, the city's tax rate would be reduced to a level where the homeowner doesn't pay more tax than in the previous year, Costick said.

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi suggested that efforts be made to hold the line on additional revenue for the city from the increased property tax assessments, which have increased the city's total state equalized value.

A tax rate is levied on the assessed value of property. If the city's state equalized value increases this year, one mill will generate more revenue than the previous year.

"We're going to try to maintain the present rate. The rate would not anticipate using the 10 percent (average property tax assessment increase)," Vagnozzi said.

FOR EXAMPLE, this year's city tax rate is 9.4 mills. Under the state Truth-in-Taxation law, the city was required to roll back its rate to 8.6 mills, which would have generated the same amount of money the city would have received if property tax assessments had risen at the same percentage as inflation.

'With the growth we've had, I think we should be able to meet that goal.'

— William Costick
city manager

But city administrators last year requested a public hearing to increase the tax rate 9.2 percent beyond the state-required rollback to help finance a \$24 million budget. Assessments last year increased an average 12 percent with some as high as 20 percent.

If the financial picture is as expected in 1989-90, city administrators are hoping to levy the still undetermined state-required rollback without asking for a public hearing to increase the rate.

"As property values have increased, we should be able to reduce the millage by an amount equal to the increase," Costick added.

Last year, the city was faced with more than a \$1 million revenue loss because of the lack of a surplus to carry over into the new year, decreasing building permit fees and the elimination of the federal shared revenues. Increased costs also pinched the budget.

Though city officials are attempting to hold the line on taxes, Costick cautioned that the city's attempts have no effect on tax rates levied by other taxing jurisdictions, such as the Farmington Public Schools, Oakland Community College, Oakland Intermediate Schools and Oakland County.

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Farmington educators hope a new program will take the vocational education mold and break it forever.

A new "Technology Education" program will be introduced, restructuring the vocational education program in Farmington Public Schools to meet the needs of a more general student. Staff members will begin immediately to write curriculum, according to the program's director, Earl Baumunk.

"Information has doubled every 30 months," Baumunk told staffers who attended an all-day seminar last month where the concept was introduced. "We can't have it like we used to have it. Change is here."

Superintendent Graham Lewis stressed that the changed program "will not destroy people's lives and careers" but enhance them.

The seminar was conducted by Ernest Savage, consultant on similar programs from his post at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He helped the staff learn to accept

change and introduced the basic concepts of technology and how important they are in life.

SAVAGE CALLS technology education "an essential for the 21st century."

"Take a look at secretarial skills that are fundamental to our existence," he said. "Today, we have all that 'whiz bang' stuff. Technology alters the shape of society. That's why it's so important for someone in education to talk to kids about it."

The afternoon session took apart the district's current programs and showed how they could be restructured, which concerned some teachers.

"We had some fireworks in the afternoon, but we hashed it out and will begin writing curriculum immediately," Baumunk said.

Savage said similar feelings are occurring with traditional vocational education staffs nationwide.

"Change is the essence of what we want to discuss this morning," he said. "I think some people are pretty uptight about this — they are across the country."

A SIMILAR program is already being used in the Ohio public school system. The approach takes into account communication, physical and bio-related technologies.

Savage advocates studying technological education in all grades, touching on key points by the time a student reaches late elementary school.

Exxon service honor awarded to resident

Clifford Coffey, automotive development manager for Exxon Chemical Co.'s Automotive Sector, was awarded the Forest A. McFarland Award for "outstanding service" to the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE).

The SAE cited the Farmington Hills resident for "efforts and leadership contributing strongly to the Rubber & Plastics Committee's technical program."

Coffey has been a part of Exxon's automotive development since first being assigned to Detroit in 1959, and then continuously since 1978. He previously was manager of the Thermoplastic Elastomers Division at Exxon's Houston office, before being assigned to his current position.

Coffey serves as adjunct professor of automotive rubber technology at Eastern Michigan University. He also serves on the executive board of the Detroit Rubber Group and is on the editorial board of Automotive Polymers and Design magazine.

He was a member of the SAE's rubber and plastics activities committee for seven years before recently serving two years as its chair-



Clifford Coffey

man. An extensive list of professional credits also includes service as a representative with the United States delegation to the International Rubber Study Group in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1972.



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