

Autonomous library to have taxing power

By Joanno Maliszewski
staff writer

As soon as Gov. James Blanchard signs the new district library law, the Farmington Community Library will become independent and have taxing authority.

Library trustees hope to receive the Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils' support to build a new main library and ask voters for a bond proposal and operating millage.

Passage of the district library law, Senate Bill 140, means that even without the councils' support, library trustees may ask voters for a bond proposal for a new library, as well as a tax levy for the two-branch system's operations.

"We automatically have authority status," library director Beverly Papal said, adding that she still recommends council support.

Farmington city manager Robert Deadman agreed. "Without council support, it may be very difficult to get support from voters," he said.

Under the new law, library trustees are required to develop an organization plan, including whether five to eight members will be ap-

pointed or seven will be elected, and whether trustees plan to finance the system with council appropriations or voter-approved tax levy.

LIBRARY TRUSTEES continue to want to be appointed by each council's mayor, instead of elected by the public. Appointments allow the city councils some continuing measure of influence over who sits on the board.

The library law actually clarifies the role of the district library, of which the Farmington Community Library was the first such district library in the state. In 1956, Farmington and Farmington Township (now Farmington Hills) passed a resolution creating the library district.

The new law permits library trustees to levy a voter-approved tax of a maximum two mills for library purposes. An accompanying bill, which also passed, called the district library financing act, gives library trustees authority to issue bonds and borrow money, with voter approval. Library trustees also may acquire property and construct buildings.

If voters approve a request for operating taxes for the library, each city's budget is expected to be rolled back an amount equal to the levy.

The two city councils have collectively appropriated about three-quarters of a mill to the library in their proposed 1989-90 budgets. In 1985, Farmington and Farmington Township voters approved the municipalities' allocation of five-hundredths of a mill for library operations for 20 years. In 1987, voters approved one mill for library expansion (within this period, the downtown Farmington library was built). In 1974, after Farmington Hills was incorporated as a city and moved to a budget based on state equalized valuations, the voter-approved millages were stopped.

DEADMAN SAID last week that neither city budget could accommodate the financial operating and staffing needs of a new main library and the existing Farmington branch.

Seeking independence and taxing authority is new for the Farmington Community Library. In 1979, voters defeated two library proposals — one for independence and a second for a 1.5-mill levy. In the early 1980s, the two councils denied requests to again place the issue on the ballot.



DOUGLAS E. SUSALLA/staff photographer

Farmington and Farmington Hills voters may be asked to support a multimillion dollar bond proposal and operating millage Nov. 7 for a

new main library to replace the cramped, more than 20-year-old Farmington Hills library, above.

Trustees may ask for money to build new public library

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need for financial support from Farmington and Farmington Hills.

RELATIVE SILENCE marked the city council's reaction to library trustees' request for a ballot issue and to plans for a new library. Opposition was not offered, but neither was overwhelming support. But the councils agreed library trustees and library director Beverly Papal should firm up their plans for a Nov. 7 ballot issue.

"We want your support. We realize the value of it," library board President Charlotte Naverski said.

Public support for any library building and operating proposal appears on hold. The city councils are waiting for library director Beverly Papal to propose ballot language, exact dollar amounts for a bond proposal and operating millage and possible sites for a new library. The goal is to get council support by early June.

"Unless a site or multiple sites is

identified, it's going to be difficult to know what to ask voters for," Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman said.

FACED WITH several options proposed by Troy-based architects Minoru Yamasaki & Associates, library trustees support building a new main library, rather than expanding the existing 12 Mile library.

"The board feels this option is the proper action for the long-term resolution of our problems and the wisest use of tax moneys for expansion," Papal said.

Building a new facility twice the size of the existing Hills library is one of three options proposed by the architects. The estimated is about \$10.2 million, plus the costs of land. Four undisclosed sites are under study.

A committee of council members and library trustees — formed to study the architects' three options — met twice but failed to reach a consensus, Papal said.

The committee discussed the pos-

sibility of building a third branch. But Papal told the city councils that that move would only triple staffing needs.

THE FINANCIAL costs between building a new library and expanding the existing main library are "not appreciably different," Papal said. Long-term operational costs could be less in a new, energy-efficient building. Expansion of the existing library would require an additional mechanical system.

A new building also would provide better use and planning of public areas, which would require less of an increase in staff. A new building also would give opportunity to plan better flexibility for future needs, Papal said.

One option, at an estimated \$11.4 million, called for expanding the existing library on 12 Mile. Another involved expanding on property immediately west of the library for an estimated \$10.7 million. Both options posed problems in linking the existing building with the addition.

New library would meet space needs, leave room to expand

A new main library in Farmington Hills would be designed to meet the space needs for patrons, books, materials and technological services through the year 2015.

The existing 38,000-square-foot library, 32737 12 Mile, was built in 1972 and was expected to serve public needs for 20 years.

On Mondays through Thursdays, 4,000 patrons walk through the Hills library doors. One-thousand patrons use the library in the seven hours it is open on Saturday and during the four hours it is open on Sunday.

• From 1977-78 to 1987-88, the library system has grown 30 percent in circulation, 159 percent in reference services, 56 percent in books and 3.8 percent in staff (full-time equivalent).

• The size of a collection is the driving force behind the size of a library. The percentage of materials circulating at any given time is taken into consideration when planning the size of a library.

• By the year 2,015, Farmington and Farmington Hills are expected

to have a combined population of 103,000.

• A proposed new 78,000-square-foot library could provide room for an estimated 3.25 volumes per person to meet population needs of 2,015.

• Ninety-five percent of the area's residents use the Farmington libraries exclusively and half are active users.

• Preliminary plans are to increase seating in the adult, browsing and quiet room sections from 119 to 254 chairs.

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