

Rival tax proposals aim for '90 ballot

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Anti-tax people can take their pick of two suburban groups working for 1990 ballot proposals to cut property taxes.

"It's better if we let everyone go their own way," said economist Patrick Anderson after the former CUT (Citizens Unfairly Taxed) split Sept. 9. He is allied with former Oakland prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson.

The rival group is keeping the old CUT name and is headed by William D. McMaster, Bloomfield Township public relations man.

"It was a rocky marriage," quipped Patterson, "and I thought it was better to split before we had kids."

HERE ARE the differences:

- The Patterson-Anderson group, which reorganized last weekend, advocates a complex amendment that concentrates on cutting school millage rates and allowing assessments to rise no faster than inflation.
- McMaster's group attacks as-

sessments, the valuation local government puts on land and buildings for tax purposes. It rejected the Anderson-Patterson proposal.

After crediting Patterson and Anderson with much volunteer work, McMaster summed up their differences: "They concentrated their attention on changing the school millage rate that not only would cut property taxes, but contained provisions that would have guaranteed continued future increases in property tax assessments."

Countered Anderson: "We limit it (assessments) to the inflation rate and new construction."

JUST WHO HAS the right to use the CUT name is unsettled.

McMaster last week issued a statement on behalf of CUT, accusing Patterson and Anderson of "quitting and leaving the meeting. Upon their departure, the majority of the total board members of CUT voted to have McMaster serve as acting chairman of the CUT board of directors."

Anderson's version: "We disband-

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ed the group last Saturday morning (Sept. 9). We had four of the five officers — three there and a proxy.

"He (McMaster) used the name in the press release. But he's not going to be able to use it because we have it registered."

Anderson said a dozen of the 35 board members were with McMaster. Anderson and Patterson say the rest of the board members are with them.

Anderson said it's relatively unimportant who has the CUT name be-

cause the group has no treasury. "All the work, the people, the momentum — that comes with us," said Anderson, chief economist of Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. in Farmington Hills.

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THE POSITION of Richard Headlee, chief executive of Alexander Hamilton, was unclear.

"Dick was out of town and didn't

participate (Sept. 9)," said Anderson. "I talked to him on the phone afterwards, and he didn't seem broken up."

"He has not taken a formal role in the group Patterson and I have. He's very much interested in opposing Proposals A and B on the Nov. 7 ballot. My guess is that he'll just work against A and B."

Headlee chaired the group that won voter approval of the 1978 tax limitation amendment — the so-called Headlee amendment.

Anderson said his group wants to

strengthen the Headlee amendment by:

- Reducing school operating property taxes to a 30-mill limit, saving \$600 million statewide.
- Allocating more of the state budget to K-12 education without compromising local control.
- Limiting assessment increases to the rate of inflation. Currently the Headlee amendment allows assessments to rise with the market but requires a corresponding tax rate cut if assessment hikes exceed the consumer price index of inflation.

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