

Landscape bill sparks debate

By Casey Hane
staff writer

A portion of a major landscaping plan was approved by the Farmington school board Tuesday, but trustee James Abernethy voted against the plan, saying it was nearly double the original estimate.

Estimates given last week showed the project costs had increased to \$695,500 from April 1989 estimates of \$400,000.

"What we have in front of us this evening is something twice that," Abernethy said Tuesday. "Yet it comes with the administration's recommendation. Do you really recommend we exceed our original estimate by almost 100 percent called for landscaping, asphalt and concrete

work and lawn sprinkling systems. A \$46,800 proposal for sprinkling systems for four schools was tabled until the board could determine the necessity of such a purchase.

Trustees also voted Tuesday to leave out plans that would have closed the district-owned sledding hill at the corner of Shawwassee and Farmington Road by planting it with evergreen trees. Further discussion of the sledding hill was postponed until the June 19 board meeting.

THIS IS the second time the district has gone out for bid for district-wide landscaping projects. The first time, they received only two bids, so split the project into smaller pieces for re-bidding. Four contractors bid the second time.

School administrators and local

landscape architect John Grissim told the school board the amount had increased because of drainage problems on the sites, additions to the project based on need, and other unanticipated costs.

"I feel secure in making that recommendation," said Don Cowan, director of operations and student services. "We're still within the parameters totally."

District architect Ron Altin conceded that "no doubt the scope of the project did grow," but added "I still feel it needs to be done."

SOME TRUSTEES favored the project, whatever the cost. "This had better be a priority with us, because it certainly is with our community,"

said board President Helen Prutow. "This is a priority — we have to get this done."

"I think we have a continued concern from our community that our property is unsightly," added trustee Susan Rennels.

But Abernethy remained concerned about the larger costs, especially in relation to other district studies on secondary education and building maintenance and use, which may also need money.

He said residents also remain concerned about overcrowding problems, which may eat at the district's resources. "We had better start being careful. . . in this district," he added.

The landscaping proposal involves various plans for 12 buildings in the district.

Election day's today for schools

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The other incumbent whose term is up this year, Janice Rolnick, is not seeking re-election. Polls are open today from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The district has four voting precincts, which are different than city voting precincts:

- Farmington Training Center, 32000 Thomas.
- O.E. Dunkel Middle School, 32800 W. 12 Mile.
- Warner Middle School, 30303 W. 14 Mile.

• East Middle School, 25000 Middlebelt.

Clarencetown voters will fill two school board seats from among incumbents Daniel Morrison and Linda Brandemuhl and challenger George Empey.

Walled Lake Consolidated Schools voters will fill one seat from between incumbent David Flammer and challenger Jim Fugit.

Voters in both districts will consider wading the Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment tax roll-back.

Safety concerns spur move to close sled hill

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City Manager Robert Deadman said a joint administrative committee between the city and school district had discussed safety issues relating to the hill, prompting the prohibition of toboggans last year.

He said the hill became more dangerous in the 1980s when Farmington Road was built, thus shortening the hill. Larger crowds in recent years have made the problem worse.

"When the hill becomes slippery, they can actually outrun the hill," he said. "There are a lot of injuries that aren't reported to us. We make quite

a few police runs over there now.

"The sledding just needs to be taken to another location, that's all."

After discussing the issue further on June 19, school board members are expected to approach the Farmington City Council to get their opinion on the sled hill.

Dan Potter, Farmington Hills director of special services, said his city has a hill designed for sledding in Heritage Park on Farmington Road and is also planning some less-steep sledding areas for smaller children this winter. The Heritage Park hill is "high and long, not wide like the school board hill," he said.

Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-840)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric News, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009-0910. Second-class postage paid at Birmingham, MI 48009-0910. Postmaster: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009-0910. Telephone 541-1100.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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One year \$36.40
(Includes 12 issues in Michigan)

Newstand per copy, 50c

One year \$55.00
(Published in U.S.A.)

One year \$80.00
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