

Creative Living

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Budget wrangling leaves local arts in limbo

By Linda Ann Chornik
special writer

Gov. John Engler's proposed budget cuts, rejected by the state House appropriations committee, could devastate the budgets, programs and services offered by community arts groups if they're introduced again and passed.

Among the local groups that could be affected are the Plymouth Community Arts Council and the Livonia Symphony Orchestra.

The Farmington Area Arts Commission won't directly be affected. Farmington and Farmington Hills cover FAAC's \$9,000 budget. But FAAC vice chairman Robert Benjamin, who taught art in Farmington Public Schools for 36 years, hoped that school art programs statewide wouldn't suffer from the budget-cutting act. "Without art, you're not completely educated."

The governor, the House and the Senate continue to wrestle with ways to prevent a \$1.1-billion state budget deficit. Engler recommended drasti-

cally cutting the state's \$49-million equity package for cultural organizations and institutions.

Meanwhile, an executive order in January freezing \$4.3 million of the Michigan Council for the Arts' budgeted \$9.1 million in grants for 1990-91 continues to wreak havoc with the budgets of cultural groups as well as individual artists, writers and musicians.

The executive order proposes eliminating all MCA grants beginning in October and cutting the MCA staff budget by half.

Two weeks ago, the Michigan Council for the Arts informed the Plymouth Community Arts Council all art support grants have been suspended, including its current \$7,000 grant. That will severely curtail art programs and services, as well as diminish the ability to bring them to the schools.

"In Livonia, a \$9,900 grant to the Livonia Symphony (10 percent of the symphony budget) will not be forthcoming," said Lee Alankov, who serves on the Livonia Arts Commis-

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Concerned Citizens for the Arts

sion and is a Livonia Symphony Society member.

ACCORDING to state Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, "Under executive order, the governor intends to immediately stop payment of current grants owed to certain recipients and to eliminate all grants to cultural organizations beginning Oct. 1."

"If the proposed budget cuts are put into effect, a part of our society

would be void of any culture," said Theresa Jaye, who serves on the Livonia Arts Commission.

The Livonia Symphony Orchestra is funded in part by the Livonia Arts Commission, the Michigan Council for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, local businesses, corporations and private contributors. NEA funding is in part tied to state arts council funding.

With the current freeze on grants, Livonia Symphony performances

would definitely, if not severely, be curtailed for the rest of the season.

"It (the proposed budget cuts) does not affect us directly," Jaye said, "because the arts commission is funded by the City of Livonia, but indirectly, it would limit our access to such fine programs put on by organizations such as the Michigan Opera Theater and the Livonia Symphony Orchestra."

A SOLD-OUT Jan. 18 performance of the Michigan Opera Theater musical revue, "Broadway Babies and Phantoms," presented by the Livonia Arts Commission, would never have taken place without grant assistance through MOT's Department of Community Services.

In Plymouth, the \$7,000 state grant represents 10 percent of the arts council budget.

The freeze on state grants may affect Music in the Park, the Art Rental Gallery and bringing performers into the schools. It also may delay converting the historic Wilcox Mill into a community arts center, said

Kathryn Savitskie, Plymouth Community Arts Council executive director.

"If the governor gets his way, I think that the arts and culture are going to be devastated in the State of Michigan," said Marilyn Wheaton, executive director of Concerned Citizens for the Arts in Michigan, Michigan Advocates for the Arts, an advocacy and lobbying group for the arts.

Arts organizations were prepared to take cuts across the board like everyone else," Wheaton said. "What no one was ready for was that dollars already contracted for would be frozen."

The most devastating effect will be on educational programs, where they actually take music into the schools," Wheaton said. "The Michigan Opera Theater programs will be among the first to go."

If the proposed budget cuts are eventually voted into place, "the domino effect is incredible," Wheaton said.

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Couple's barn proud symbol of Americana

By Janice Tiger-Kramer
special writer

WHEN JOE and Judy Derek told their Realtor they wanted a house on two acres with a barn, a creek, a rock garden and city water, all in Farmington Hills, they were surprised to hear from their agent just one week later. A house with all of their requirements had just been listed.

Interested to see the property they had only dreamed of finding in the city, Joe, a lab technician at Sinai Hospital of Detroit, and Judy, office manager of the hospital's engineering department, both left work early to take a look. Joe was sold on the place before stepping inside the house.

"I slammed the car door and heard the 'whoosh' sound of a pheasant taking flight. I knew we had to live here," said Joe, 42, a naturalist and environmental lecturer whose love of wildlife and the outdoors began as a boy growing up in Detroit.

Besides the 1.9 acres, the creek and a yard filled with wild flowers and bushes, the lot was just one of a few in Farmington Hills with an old barn.

The couple moved into the 45-year-old ranch house in February 1987, and spent most of their free time exploring the land, peering into the creek and examining the condition of the 900-square-foot barn, at the bottom of a hill behind the house.

AFTER FINISHING some necessary home repairs, the Dereks began making plans to restore the two-story, hip roof barn, which stands proudly in a neighborhood of new homes north of 10 Mile.

"A few people wanted to buy the barn, but we never considered

'I slammed the car door and heard the 'whoosh' sound of a pheasant taking flight. I knew we had to live here.'

— Joe Derek
Farmington Hills

selling it," Joe said. "The barn represents the last of what used to be, and we had no plans to get rid of it."

To gather ideas for the restoration, the couple drove through Michigan and southern Indiana to look at the color and design of other barns. They even stopped to talk to farmers along the way.

BUT THE history of their own barn was revealed, almost by accident, just last summer.

One afternoon, the couple noticed two elderly women with a video camera in the street behind their property.

Since it's not uncommon for people to look at the old barn, the Dereks were used to the attention. But they were curious about the use of video equipment.

The visitors, Mary Yost of Wisconsin and her sister, Sally Sellers of Howell, grew up in the barn in the 1940s and just stopped by to reminisce.

Now in their 60s, the sisters moved into the barn with their parents shortly before World War II and lived there until the family's house (now owned by the Dereks) was built in 1946.

Their father, Lambert Sellers, originally built the barn for ponies, then planned to build the ranch house. But when war began,



The Dereks' barn, built in the 1940s, once was home to a Farmington Hills family during World War II. The couple plans to repaint the structure this summer and do minor repairs inside.

lumber was scarce and he couldn't find enough material to continue building.

TO MAKE the barn comfortable for the family, Sellers installed a wood floor, an oil burning stove, a small porch and regular house doors. An open, ladder-type staircase was used to reach the second level.

Sellers even painted the barn white to make it look more like a residence.

"The sisters were amazed that the barn was still here. They visit Detroit and our place every few years to see if things are the same," Joe said.

LAST SUMMER, the Dereks found a local contractor willing to scale the 30-foot barn to remove the original roof, install off-white shingles and build a new chimney. Joe also built a bridge over the creek leading to the barn.

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Left: Joe and Judy Derek watch the creek that runs in front of their 30-foot-high, hip roof barn. The barn is one of only a few left in Farmington Hills.

Staff photos
by
Sharon LeMieux

Botsford Inn — It's an enduring beacon of history

"And the innkeeper speaks to all of us, in the accents of today, over the decades of our past."

— Jean Fox, Botsford Inn historian

ALLEN and Orrin Weston built it as Orrin's home in 1836, when Andrew Jackson was president and Michigan was the west.

Today, the Botsford Inn, a legendary gateway to Farmington Hills at Grand River and Eight Mile, is one of the oldest hostels in the state.

The national historic site may be tattered around the edges. But it retains much of its rustic charm. It's richly symbolic of our community's hospitality and heritage.

In 1841, Stephen Jennings converted the inn to a tavern.

"Known as the Sixteen Mile House (it was 16 miles out from the heart of Detroit), it was the stagecoach stop here in Clarencville on the Grand River plank road, which followed an Indian trail that went on to Lake Michigan," a state historic marker in the front courtyard tells us.

Milton Botsford, from a Farmington Township pioneer family, bought it in 1860, after a succession of owners, including John Claughty, who the town of Clarencville, which survives today as a school district, was named after.

After Botsford acquired it, the inn soon became a popular meeting



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place for drovers, farmers and travelers in and from Detroit.

AUTO PIONEER Henry Ford I, who met his wife, Clara, at a square dance there, bought the Botsford Inn in 1924 as a romantic gesture and to save it from demolition during Grand River's widening.

John Anhut's father, John Nicholson Anhut, bought the landmark from the Ford estate in 1951. The lodging market and the Farmington area have changed dramatically since then.

Anhut, EVER the entrepreneur, has made several major building additions to the original structure. But he has never slighted the inn's role as a human establishment serving people and not solely a money-making operation; "has never gone hog wild with modern luxuries."

Lack of feelers from historically sensitive buyers recently prompted Anhut to take the inn off the market. Instead, he hired a general manager to run day-to-day operations.

Personally, I can't envision the inn without Anhut, who more than anyone understands its distinguished place in local history, at the helm.

For example, touches of Americana, wood floors and five wood-burning fireplaces spice the guest areas. And much of the furniture came from Henry Ford's Fair Lane mansion in Dearborn.

Ford once said "history is more or less bunk," but the old man's love for the inn was undying.

"With Henry's drive and enthusiasm as a spur, the family decided it was more important to find people, like the Anhuts, who would keep the inn in the spirit of my great-grandfather," William Clay Ford Jr. once told me.

Chances are, the Weston brothers would beam with pride at what the state Legislature proclaimed during the inn's sesquicentennial in 1986.

"It stands as a beautiful window to a bygone age, with changes and improvements unable to obscure the feeling of history."

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