

Parents want a say in school budget cuts

By Casey Hans
Staff writer

Saying they want to save 106 school jobs from the chopping block, parents have suggested forming a committee to guide Farmington schools through budget cuts following the defeat of two operating tax proposals Feb. 5.

"I feel very strongly a committee of . . . parents, teachers and administrators is needed to go over the budget line by line," said Sue Leonard, one of several residents addressing the board Tuesday, advocating community involvement in the review of school finances.

Although board president Susan Rennels said she would welcome suggestions during

budget sessions about other areas to cut, she said the jobs cannot be saved. "The pink slips will go out" to employee ranks in April and layoffs will be effective at the start of the new budget year July 1, Rennels confirmed.

Parents also suggested the board look at transportation — with one suggesting the total elimination of the program — insurance comparison shopping, early retirement programs for staff, textbook purchases, and administrative costs when making cuts.

THE TWO ballot propositions, one for 2.7 mills for general operations and one for 1 mill for capital projects, were both handily defeated Feb. 5, with 21 percent of the reg-

istered voters in the school district jammed the polling places. The defeat followed highly publicized campaigns for and against the millage.

The cutting of 106 jobs was proposed after a review of changes made in the past decade when times were good, said superintendent Michael Flanagan. "The single biggest thing we took advantage of is lowering class size," he said. The district also increased the paraprofessional staff, altered cleaning and maintenance schedules and increased transportation services and costs.

The 106 cuts will include 29 custodial, 40 paraprofessional and 37.5 teaching positions. The cuts will save the district about \$3 million and will increase class sizes by one student.

Transportation cuts of \$300,000 were already made prior to the millage election; another necessary \$3 million have yet to be determined, Flanagan said.

"We still have a lot of work to do," he said. "And there's going to be differences in opinion" about where cuts are made.

THE DISTRICT went to voters in February after the state Legislature voted last summer to take millions of dollars from out-of-formula school districts. Farmington was the hardest hit district in the state, losing \$5.8 million. Flanagan said he expects the state to recapture another \$2-to-4 million in state aid because of deep budget cutting taking place at the state level.

Flanagan also said Tuesday it appears the more than 50 districts suing the state over last summer's lost money would likely lose their court case.

Parent Cheryl Brickner was the only one Tuesday to suggest the district attempt another millage, but Flanagan was firm against it as he was throughout the millage campaign.

"You don't keep jamming an election down their throats until it passes," he added. "That's a personal belief. I think it protects the system somehow."

Flanagan said he would look at the district's situation a year from now, after local cuts and possible further state cuts had been made.

Public awareness could prevent many burn injuries

Most burns are associated with cooking and scalding accidents.

That's the bottomline during National Burn Awareness Week, Feb. 3-9.

"We do have a casual attitude toward fires and burns," said Farmington Hills deputy fire chief Peter Baldwin. "A lot of it has to do with taking precautionary steps and being vigilant."

The nationally designated burn awareness week is designed to simply remind people that safety is taken for granted and how easy it is to prevent burns.

"Burn injury is a serious problem in the United States. Each year, some 2 million people suffer from burn injuries. Approximately 70,000 of these Americans must be hospitalized for some period of time, and more than 12,000 burn victims die each year as a result of their inju-

ries," according to a proclamation signed by President George Bush.

SNOKE DETECTORS — installing them and maintaining them — is one of the most important steps in preventing burns, Baldwin said. Developing safety habits in cooking, storing and handling flammable materials is of equal importance.

Simple habits such as turning in the handles on pots and pans while on the stove to prevent children from grabbing handles and burning themselves can prevent needless tragedies, Baldwin said.

For example, a lawn mower must be allowed to cool after cutting the lawn before putting gas in it, Baldwin said. "People are not being cautious."

Consider that:
• A majority of burns are caused by contact with hot tap water and

hot liquid spills.

• Children under the age of 5 years and adults over 65 are those most seriously and frequently burned.

To avoid burns, you should:
• Lower water heaters to 130 degrees or less. At 160 degrees, it takes

less than one second to get a third degree burn. At 130 degrees, it takes 30 seconds.

• Install tempering valves in either the water line or bathtub. It's best to use a valve which regulates the temperature and pressure.

• Test the temperatures of bath

water before placing a child in the tub. Test the water by moving your hand through the water for several seconds. If the water feels hot, add cold water until the temperature feels comfortable.

• Do not leave young children alone in the bathroom or near porta-

ble appliances such as coffee pots, electric frypans.

• Keep children at a safe distance while drinking or pouring hot liquids.

• Test all hot food and drink before feeding your child, especially if you use a microwave.

clarification

A recent article on Odyssey of the Mind should have noted that a parent group for gifted students, Farmington Association for Children With Exceptional Talent, organized the original OM competition in the Farmington Public Schools in the early 1980s.

Two FACET members, Pat Gir-

bach and Rose Marie Fertig, coordinated the effort to bring the program to Farmington in 1982, according to those involved in the current competition.

Today, the district encourages all students throughout the district to participate.

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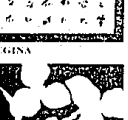
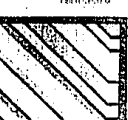
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