

## Board OKs TV meetings

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TRUSTEES NIXED a lesser proposal for \$10,500 that offered just one camera and no sound system, and a more expensive plan for \$103,600 that offered a system similar to the one in the Farmington Hills City Council chambers. All agreed that a good sound system would be a must; the board currently uses no sound system at its meetings.

The approved plan is expected to cost the district \$26,400 for start-up, though board members requested administration to return to them with appropriate bids for the project and a timeline. Once installed, it will cost about \$6,400 per year to operate, with most of the cost being to pay audio and video operators.

School/community relations director Pamela O'Malley said sales of the equipment will take six to eight weeks for delivery.

Plans include cablecasting regular 8 p.m. meetings live on TV-10, the education cable channel which has its studios in North Farmington High School. O'Malley said meetings which have to be moved to accommodate larger crowds could be handled through a remote cablecast.

The proposal does not address cablecasting special board meetings or any board committee meetings usually held before the 8 p.m. hour. O'Malley said it might be possible to tape some of those additional meetings for future cablecast.

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Auditors said last week the Farmington Public School District is "reasonably" healthy, but lower cash reserves this year and political issues beyond its control could cause problems in the future.

"The overall position is that it (the district) is in reasonably good shape," said Fred Haller of Plante & Moran — the Southfield accounting firm which does the district's annual audit — answering parent David York's question during an Oct. 15 presentation to the Farmington school board.

But with an undesignated fund balance of \$3.2 million as of June 30, the district is left with a savings account amounting to a little more than three percent of its current

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— Fred Haller  
of accounting firm

\$96.95 million budget. It's enough to operate the 10,400-student district for about one week of school, said school officials.

"It's less than the state average, and there's a lot of storm clouds on the horizon," Haller warned. "It's certainly a time to be careful."

The cash reserves, called a "fund

equity" in district financial statements, is "usually a barometer for a school district." Haller said, who added that the state average for a district is about 8 percent.

"As we talk about all these uncertainties, it becomes increasingly important that you have a fund balance," School officials have fought in recent years with some factions of the community who have claimed the district shouldn't have kept any sort of cash reserves.

IN THE PAST year, school officials said they were relieved there was something there to carry them through a potential crisis in which \$5.8 million was taken away by the state.

Future uncertainties could include how the recently approved tax base sharing plan is implemented by the state, how soon the state recapture

program is phased out, how the 1992 property tax freeze will impact the district, and how Michigan residents vote on any number of ballot issues next fall.

The Farmington district shows a \$10.48 million fund balance as of June 30, but \$7.2 million of that is earmarked to pay open purchase orders, for inventories, to pay a large chunk of the Gili Elementary renovation project, for capital improvements already done but not yet paid for the long-term liability for vested termination pay.

Of the \$86.9 million budgeted in 1990-91, the district spent \$91.3 million dipping into those reserves. Changes in state recapture during the past year and loss of a millage election forced the district to cut back its budget expectations for the current 1991-92 year, according to assistant superintendent for finance,

Bruce Barrett. One hundred and forty jobs were cut.

PROGRAMS WERE pared, including transportation, business administration, and support services. And, where the district had previously budgeted a 10 percent cash reserve in years past, that has been pared back to five percent for the current year.

Barrett noted the district has taken a conservative approach, and is in decent shape because of having a financial cushion in place.

But that may change in the future, depending on legislative changes to property tax laws. "We're in an environment of uncertainty," he added. "Major change has begun and we've had to respond." He said he foresees "radical changes" to how schools are financed in the future.

## Canfield residents battle city's plan to pave street

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

As far as James and Dorothy Woolley are concerned, 50.1 percent isn't enough of a majority to force homeowners on Canfield Street to have their gravel street paved.

That's where the Woolleys' hit the pavement, canvassed their neighborhood and got nearly two-thirds of their neighbors — 63.1 percent — to sign a petition against the proposed pavement.

"We moved here because we loved the country atmosphere," said James Woolley.

The couple presented their peti-

**'People just didn't realize how much the total amount they would have to pay for paving.'**

— Dorothy Woolley  
Canfield resident

tion to city hall staff. The problem was that earlier in September, the city council had already adopted a resolution for paving Canfield, from Grayfield to the northern tip of the road.

So back to the drawing board. The city council a week ago agreed to have another informational meeting

about road paving along Canfield followed by a public hearing at 7:30 p.m., Monday, Nov. 18 in city council chambers, 31155 11 Mile.

"People just didn't realize how much the total amount they would have to pay for paving," said Dorothy Woolley.

RESIDENTS WERE originally told that the cost of paving for each lot owner — whose footage abuts on Canfield — was roughly \$3,954. That's true. But the Woolleys' say there's more truth to be known.

For example, if a lot owner decides to stretch out payments over 10 years, the paving would cost about \$6,000 including interest. Over 15 years, the lot owner would pay \$8,000.

"One person owns four lots. A lot

of the residents are senior citizens and young couples," James Woolley said. "Everyone I asked, I said, 'Did you know much this will cost?' When I showed them what it would be with interest, they thought was too much money."

With a 63-percent majority in favor of not paving, councilwoman Jean Fox said she saw no reason to have yet another public hearing. The city's policy is to go ahead with road improvements if 50 percent of the property owners are in favor.

"I think 50.1 percent is a pretty small margin," James Woolley told the city council.

But Mayor Aldo Vagnotti said, "We do have a policy on a majority."

CANFIELD RESIDENT Tim Schmidt asked for another public hearing. "It only works if everyone is properly informed. Apparently that's not the case on this issue."

The resident called the change in petitions an "amazing reversal. Mr.

Woolley is not what I would call a high pressure salesman. Though his wife could charm the socks off everyone."

Money, however, isn't the only concern, James Woolley said. Homeowners don't have city water and sewer yet. "First things first."

Yet Dick Mechem, a Canfield resident who circulated the petition that received 50.1 percent in support of paving, said the paving issues is splitting up his neighborhood. "Right now it seems it's getting to be homeowner versus homeowner. They are my neighbors."

Mechem said he didn't force anyone to sign his petition. "I don't belong to the Mafia. I didn't twist arms."

He said he doesn't like the idea of changing decisions. "Why people I approached changed their minds, I don't know. Can I petition after you make a decision on this (Woolleys' petition). We can carry this on to doomsday."

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