

Hills tightens the belt on 1996 proposed budget

BY BILL COUTANT
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Farmington Hills is trying to hold the line on its 1995-96 budget by asking departments to keep increases, excluding personnel, within 1 percent.

That has resulted in a proposed budget totaling \$51,800,598, including a \$32,600,049 for operations. Along with personnel increases, which are contract bound, and previous budget commitments, the proposed budget would hand taxpayers a 2.13 percent increase, well below the increase of the Consumer Price Index, said City Manager Bill Costick.

Costick presented the budget to the city council during a special meeting Monday night before returning with the council for study sessions to review the public works and road budgets. The final budget will be presented at a public hearing May 22 and must be approved by June 1.

The city will add an administrative services division in the new year as part of efforts to streamline and update the administration's computerization and other technology.

"That's the most significant change in the general fund," Costick said.

Because of increased interest rates, the city will benefit to the tune of \$250,000 in money it has invested, will continue to have a fund balance of 10 percent in its general fund, while only increasing taxes by 2.13 percent. If the budget is adopted as proposed.

Although the budget will meet the city's needs and provide for improved services, there are some concerns for the near future, Costick said.

The city will receive the last of its state money, some \$200,000 for the coming year, from the Build Michigan Program. And once

most of the current budgeted road projects are completed, there won't be a lot budgeted for them until more debt is retired, he said.

There will be few personnel additions this year. One part-time department of public works position will become full-time and two additional positions will be added for parks maintenance. "We are further along than anticipated with our parks," Costick said. "There's a considerable amount of maintenance."

With three additional soccer fields at the Farmington Activities Center, ball fields and soccer fields and other improvements at the Founders Sports Park, the

city has many more areas to maintain.

But Costick added that those positions would have nothing to do with the new ice arena, scheduled to open Sept. 1.

"We don't have an ice arena budget prepared yet," he said. "But that will be totally self-supporting — this year."

The city's operating budget includes \$11,028,821 (34 percent) for police, \$5,710,239 (18 percent) for administration, \$2,762,338 (8 percent) for refuse removal, \$2,762,616 (8 percent) for fire protection, \$2,242,957 (7 percent) for

public services, \$2,108,460 (6 percent) for the library, \$2,010,476 (6 percent) for special services, \$1,711,277 (5 percent) for community development, \$1,614,743 (5 percent) for district court and \$648,072 (2 percent) for interfund transfers.

If adopted, the current tax rate would have to be rolled back from 9.1409 mills, and then, through a truth and taxation hearing, could be rolled up to 9.166 mills.

That 2.41-mill increase would mean a tax increase of \$2.41 for a homeowner who had a house with a market value of \$200,000.

Earth Day from page 1A



Highlighting the festival was the Trash to Treasure contest with participants in three age groups creating a useful object or an art object from something that would otherwise have been thrown away.

A wedding dress made from white garbage bags, submitted by area resident Margie Guyot, was honored with "The People's Choice Award" as well as placing first in the adult division.

Other unique entries included a giant holiday snowflake decoration made with plastic pop can holder rings, noise maker-shakers made with frozen orange juice cans filled with small odds and ends and a tabletop "work of art" built with discarded pop cans. There was also the clever "Bootiful" — and old boot stuffed with dried flowers.

Contest prizes were provided by Waste Management and McFarland Florist and Green Houses.

The entries were displayed following the awards presentation, drawing plenty of attention from festival goers like Farmington Hills resident Sandy Dixon who brought along her four children, ages 3-8.

"I really like this part of the festival because it emphasizes recycling and gives us ideas for things like this that we can make at home," Dixon said. "This whole festival makes people more



Taking wing: A quail is released as part of the huge celebration of Earth Day in Farmington Hills' Heritage Park.

aware of what's going on with recycling and the environment and all," she said.

Farmington resident Dave and MaryCarole Haering, who enjoyed the festival with their two children, Kelsey, 5, and Nathaniel, 2, concurred.

"This event gets better every year. We learn more about earth-related things — and people are really friendly here," said MaryCarole Haering.

"And it's important to expose your kids to the environmental

movement and the Special Olympics here," added Dave Haering.

Education is the key, agreed Farmington Hills city naturalist Joe Derek, who was on hand throughout the weekend to answer questions and offer information to folks with environmental-related concerns.

"As long as people are educated and think about things, we're farther ahead," said Derek. "The environment is important, and I'm not talking about being a 'tree

hugger.' I'm talking about clean air, clean water and clean food. Everything and everybody needs these."

"Also, as far as I know, this is the only Earth Day festival that includes Special Olympics. And when I see the interest these kids take in the environment, all I can say to people who don't take an interest is: 'What is your excuse?' If these special needs kids care so much about their world, why can't all of us?"

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Joe Derek
naturalist

Dad's day: Tom Straugh of Farmington Hills has his arms full with sons Preston, 3, and Alex, 5, at Heritage Park.



Adrian's keeper: Adrian Draghili, 9, of Farmington Hills displays his catch at the inaugural Shiawassee Park Fishing Derby.

Fishing from page 1A

Miko Wyplynski had thoughts of releasing the trout he caught. His girlfriend wouldn't let him.

"I was so optimistic, I didn't bring anything to put it in," said Wyplynski, a Hills resident.

Participants were allowed to keep the fish. Initially, the derby was intended to be catch and release.

Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department officials checked with Oakland County Health Department and the Department of Natural Resources; officials said that tributary is the cleanest part of the Upper Rouge. Hills Parks and Recreation and the city of Farmington sponsored the event.

Rainbow trout were kept in with fencing. They were free to swim upstream after the event.

None of the fish were tagged, said naturalist Joe Derek. Some have been in Southfield's fishing derby, though, and someone caught a 20-inch trout two years after it was tagged.

The fishing derby also coincided with opening day for trout fishing statewide. Derek was nervous at the outset when no one had a nibble during the first 10 minutes. By 10:30 a.m., he estimated 80 trout were caught.

"Everybody is having a lot of fun," Derek said.

Instead of getting people to cast votes, some city council members

watched as residents cast fishing lines.

One fisherman jokingly boasted the trout he had just caught was 17 inches and at least five pounds.

Dick Tupper, a hardware store owner who's heard a few fish stories in his time on city council, pulled out his tape measure. The fish wiggled in barely at 13 inches.

Scott McConnell of Farmington Hills didn't expect to land the big one with his two sons, Kevin, 6, and Bryan, 4. They had practiced casting for two weeks, but by 10 a.m. there wasn't even a nibble.

"They're having fun," McConnell said. "I don't think they care about that part."

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