

Council goes along with tax hike to boost budget

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

With little fanfare or criticism, the Farmington Hills City Council approved a 1995-96 budget that will raise property taxes by less than 2 percent on average.

The council will vote final approval of the budget Tuesday, before the June 1 deadline.

City Manager Bill Costick pointed out that the city's tax rate, at one time 10 mills, went down from 1990 to 1993. The modest increases since 1993 have been as a result of the city's ability to use general fund balance money, something it won't be able to do in the future, he said.

"We will no longer be able to rely on a fund balance," he said. Costick said increased police

and fire calls, more public works projects and wage increases have put pressure on the city to be more efficient. Of the few increases, technology advances in phone mail, computers and other administrative efforts will help the city hold the line.

Farmington Hills is 27th of 32 cities in Oakland County for tax rates, at 9.1650 mills. The city has 360 employees, fewer than Southfield (632) and Troy (415), which are comparable in size to Farmington Hills, Costick said.

The budget did have one critic. Al Rosen, who spoke at the public hearing, said with a boom in new house construction, the city shouldn't need to increase taxes. "Where's your sense of fiduciary responsibility?" he said.

Costick said at the high point in 1987, the city made \$1,091,000 in building permit fees. But with less new construction, the figure will drop.

Councilman Terry Sever said the 1980s were over, along with the building money they brought into the city.

"We had the luxury in the 1980s of new construction," he said. "But we're mauling out."

The council also recommended that a portion of fees coming to the court beyond costs go toward a future court expansion. In addition, council members recommended the budget move up two sidewalk projects by a year for the 1995-96 budget.

One would fill in a gap between Glenbrook and Middlebelt at a

cost of \$50,000 and another would fill in a gap from Herndonwood to Balmoral at a cost of \$24,000. The money had already been set aside for next year's budget.

In other action, the council: ■ Approved a bid of \$29,860.50 by H & H Excavating of Jackson to construct a gravel entrance road and 24-car parking lot for the Woodland Hills Park on Farmington west of Oakland Community College.

The lot will be 150 feet west of Farmington Road and run parallel to it. The drive will connect to the paved stub road at the entrance and will cost \$5,139.50 less than estimated.

■ Approved a new telephone voice mail system that will allow callers to the city the option of

leaving a message with "a warm body" or calling into voice mail. The cost will be \$19,836.

■ Approved water main improvements for a special assessment district for Hull Road east of Power and a small stretch of Power Road crossing Hull south of 11 Mile. Residents would be assessed \$4,224.93 for the improvements.

■ Named Ken Bills, a Farmington Planning Commissioner,

Kathleen McAdaragh-Hain, of the Farmington Public Schools, and Dr. Leo Kallenbach, an epidemiologist with Henry Ford Health Sciences Center, to the Cellular Tower Study Committee. ■ Named Randal Bruce to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an alternate.

■ Set the city council summer meeting schedule. The council will meet June 12, June 19, July 10, July 24, Aug. 14 and Aug. 21.

Cops buckle down on 'buckling up'

Farmington Hills police say they'll be taking a hard line with motorists who fail to buckle up. Local cops will issue safety belt citations at all traffic stops.

Local police are taking part in a statewide effort to boost safety belt use through enforcement and education efforts. While Michigan's safety belt use rate continues to climb, approximately one-third state motorists are driving without restraints, authorities say.

"There's absolutely no good excuse for not wearing safety belts," said Chief William Dwyer. "Despite safety advances such as air bags and anti-lock brakes, safety belts are still the best protection in the event of a traffic crash. Safety belts drastically re-

duce your chances for injury and death."

A 1994 survey of Michigan motorists, conducted by University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, showed 66.1 percent of motorists buckled up. Further, pick-up truck drivers and passengers had the lowest belt use for all vehicle types, at 44.9 percent.

Women are more likely to wear safety belts, with 71.4 percent belt use compared to 60.5 percent for

men. Belt use was also lowest among 16- to 29-year-olds, with 60.2 percent buckling up.

Michigan law requires all front seat passengers to wear safety belts regardless of their age.

In addition, infants under one year must be in an approved car safety seat, whether in the back or front seat. Parents and child caregivers are cautioned that rear-facing infant seats not be used in the front seat of vehicles equipped with dual air bags.

Children ages 1-4 must be in a child safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle or in a child safety seat or wearing a safety belt in the rear seat.

Further, passengers 4 to under 16 must be in a safety belt in the front or back seat of a vehicle. If stopped, the driver of the vehicle will receive the citation for violations for this age group.

Dwyer called on the media and fellow law enforcement administrators to make belt use a priority.

Grant

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en issue. "Youth programming is also an area that continues to be a concern for the majority of council. We need to support the core of the family to stay healthy and viable."

During his tenure on the council, Grant has been supportive of acquiring park lands for both active and passive recreation, youth sports programming, senior programming, protecting the integrity of the city's master plan, and being fiscally responsible with the taxpayers' money.

"I believe I did a good job as mayor, putting the city and many wonderful things we offer our residents into a positive light," he said. "I believe I have the ability to build strong consensus amongst the council that can move the city forward toward the goals that have been established by our residents."

"I think it's important for the first person elected mayor to set the tone so that the office remains as it was designed to be — primarily ceremonial."

In addition to the council, Grant has served on the Farmington Hills Planning Commission, as well as on boards and committees for the Farmington Community Library, the community center, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, the Farmington Area Philharmonic, the area arts commission, and the multi-cultural/multi-racial council.

Grant is president and founder of the Reliance Group of Michigan, a full-service printing, business forms and promotional products company in Farmington Hills.

He and his wife, Deborah, have three children, Delores, 21; Jessica, 17; and Schyler, 13.



"The emergency team went above and beyond the call of duty."

My daughter, Alexis, has been asthmatic since she was three. So unfortunately we've been to several hospitals over the years.

One night, Alexis had an attack at ten o'clock. We needed to go to the hospital and decided to go to Botsford. The experience was good right from the start.

It began with someone opening the door for us at the new emergency department. Then we went to a room where Alexis was immediately triaged and cared for. I was really impressed with the quality of care. The Emergency Specialists were very adept in pediatrics.

Even though an asthma attack can be very scary, there was never any stress. Alexis was always treated like a person first — never like a number.

I felt the people at Botsford really cared about patients and the community. When we were leaving, the nurse in triage came back in to say good-bye and said, "Hope you feel better Alexis."



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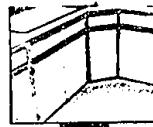
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