

For safety's sake Hills tax increase is justified

Supporting the proposed 1-mill tax increase for public safety in Farmington Hills is something like paying an insurance premium that's a bit higher than the last one.

You open the bill and note the increase. Then you might grimace and grumble and make a comment or two on the sorry state of affairs that results in costlier insurance. But in the end you pay because you know it's necessary.

That's why we're endorsing the 1-mill tax increase to be used for upgrading the police and fire departments in Farmington Hills. Simply put: It's necessary.

Farmington Hills voters will settle the tax question, along with their city council and mayoral races, in the Nov. 7 general election.

The Farmington Hills of today needs additional police officers on patrol as well as a central fire station that's operated 24 hours. The \$2.6 million tax increase would fund those improvements.

If passed, the millage would cost the owner of a \$153,000 house (the Farmington Hills average) \$76.50 a year in additional taxes. That's reasonable enough for something that — hopefully — will maintain the quality of life in the community.

For the police, "the major thrust will be to put more officers out on the street," Chief William Dwyer has promised.

There will be some improvements in computer interfacing and technology for the police and fire departments, but the bulk of the police funding increase (half a mill) would put patrol officers on the road.

Dwyer has cited the increase in crime in the city from 1993 to 1994 of 6.2 percent, the increase in service calls of 5.3 percent, and an increase in all police activities of 9.6 percent

as justification for more officers.

The Farmington Hills Fire Department seems to be providing good service with its combination of volunteer and professional firefighters, but it needs to keep up with ever-increasing fire and medical runs, says Chief Richard Marinucci.

Fire department runs have increased from 1,967 in 1982 to a projection of more than 5,000 this year, he said, and personnel and equipment haven't kept pace.

The central fire station, to be located near City Hall at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake, seems to make sense, especially since that's a short shoot away from the only entrance/exit along a seven-mile stretch of busy I-696.

Also, Marinucci's argument is sound when he says that the new station, in being staffed around the clock, would lessen the load on the other four stations and allow the department to keep expensive, seldom-used equipment.

The departments, both well-managed and costing less than in many similar cities, are due for upgrades.

Now The Three Musketeers of Millage — Dwyer, Marinucci and City Manager William Costick — need to win over a few hundred (or is it a few thousand?) Farmington Hills voters.

When the millage drive started a few weeks ago, those three city officials promised to be super-salesmen for its passage. They said they'd be out and about speaking to homeowners and the like. If they have, we haven't seen or heard about it, although we give Dwyer credit for answering a millage critic on our Letters page.

There's about six weeks left until election day. That leaves a lot of time for thumping the tub. So how about that millage hot line to City Hall?

'Bite the bullet' on road tax

We have begun to measure the battle over road funds in decades rather than years. Sections of I-96 that were resurfaced after a 1982 fuel tax increase during the Milliken administration now are bumpy with patches and potholes.

It is more embarrassing than ever to travel to neighboring states and compare their silk to our corduroy.

There is a stalemate in Lansing among state, local and business officials over how to raise new money for road improvements. Some fear no solution will be reached in this fall's session of the Michigan Legislature. Do our leaders think the problem will go away?

Many ideas are being floated around as alternatives to raising the 15-cents-a-gallon fuel tax. A few have merit. Most don't. Let's explore them: ■ "The state should be more efficient." Oh? And what has Patrick Novak been doing in his nearly five years at the helm of the Michigan Department of Transportation? He has worked at privatizing maintenance of freeway rest stops. M-DOT has recruited volunteer civic clubs, church groups, fraternities and businesses to clean up highway trash. In the 1980s, M-DOT began publishing new transportation maps every two years, instead of annually. We can't continue to bray for "more efficiency" before we look for new money.

■ "Cut other state costs first." The Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the stock-record ideologues at Mackinac Center insist any fuel tax increase for roads be offset by a reduced single business tax (SBT). Cutting SBT should be dis-

cussed on its merits. Chamber leaders do their reputation no good when they attempt to hold good roads hostage to a tax cut for themselves.

■ "Impact fees." The notion, long advanced by Oakland County's John Grubba, is that developers who generate new road needs — e.g., exit ramps, turning lanes, traffic signals — should pay for them rather than stick state and county road agencies with the costs.

As alluring and logical as the idea is, it has made no headway in Michigan. Case in point: the proposed new Tiger Stadium, which, from all news accounts, would require millions for "infrastructure" improvements.

■ "State needs first." Novak argues for pumping most new money into M-DOT. But when he was deputy Oakland County executive, he loved to point out that portions of Haggerty Road in western Oakland carry more traffic than many portions of the I-75 freeway.

■ "Toll booths." Gov. John Engler, with his national ambitions, likes to boast he has cut 13 or 14 taxes. What he fears to discuss, quite rightly, is that as legislator and governor he has supported some of the biggest fee increases in history.

We need to forget about toll booths, auto registration fees, trailer fees, driver's license fees, chauffeur's license fees and such slippery "revenue enhancements" and get to the main point.

Our political leaders are having their necks stroked by the state chamber but need to have their rumps kicked by road users. Courage, not conniving, will get our state and local roads up to the level of our neighbors.

ARKIE HUDKINS

HUDKINS



A step in the right direction

LETTERS

In bad taste

Was it absolutely necessary to report the criminal sexual conduct in the "Police and Fire Calls" of the Sept. 14 Observer? I think not. We didn't need to know all of the gruesome details. I think you went a little beyond good taste on this one.

Pat Thoresen, Farmington

She's for millage

Consider calling the police department and being told that "no car is available." It happens in some districts.

My scanner indicates that day and night, people are calling anxiously. Many problems are quickly handled before they escalate to a more serious situation.

No one appreciates paying higher property taxes, but what value would our homes have, with a poor example of police service?

Because I believe we have a well-run police department and accept the police chief's evaluation that he needs 18 more officers, I'd vote for the public safety millage knowing they would respond within a reasonable time frame. That's my idea of Valued Service.

Mrs. H. Motruik, Farmington Hills

On home schools

I was dismayed by the condescending, judgmental, and uninformed attitude I read in the Sept. 7 letter from J. Bruce Lange in response to a parent's decision to home school.

It was quite obvious that this gentleman has never researched home schooling and the very numerous studies that have been conducted on the effects of home schooling on a child's well-being, social development and educational achievements.

I do not consider myself an expert by any means, but I am familiar with several very positive studies (and no negative ones yet) regarding this growing trend. One of the more recent is the University of Michigan study released in March of 1993 that completely refutes the claim that home schooling deprives the children of contacts with others needed for social development.

In this extensive study, the home schooled children had much higher self-esteem ratings and demonstrated fewer behavioral problems than their schooled counterparts.

Home schooled children, the study found, are much less dependent upon peers for their

self-identification, have a higher self worth, and experience less depression.

I think it is important that parents understand that each of us can only do what we believe is best for our child. Not all children are alike — and not all children thrive in a school environment. The parents that I know who have chosen to home school have very well-adjusted happy children who are thriving in the home schooling environment, and who, when asked if they would like to return to school, will tell you "no" with little hesitation.

These parents also take advantage of the many programs in the home education movement offering field trips and science and music classes, as well as church and service activities.

They are not completely isolated islands, hiding their children from the rest of the cruel world, but rather parents who are trying to give their children the kind of loving environment and training they will need to succeed in the world.

No parent who chooses to home school is taking the easy way out. It is much easier to ignore the problems you see and hope they will go away than to take on the responsibility of educating your children yourself.

It is a last resort for the parent — but one that, by all measures, seems to be very positive for the child.

Lynn L. Jahneke, Farmington Hills

A good show!

My wife and I, along with our neighbors, were fortunate enough on Saturday, Sept. 9, to be part of the appreciative and enthusiastic audience at the North Farmington High School, where the production of "The Music Man" was given.

Over the years, I have seen six different renditions and productions of "The Music Man," including the original stage play and movie, and last night's (Sept. 9) production was by far the best I've ever seen.

The crew, the cast, the orchestra, even the program was so professional and outstanding.

We can appreciate the hard work, dedication, and love that went into the huge team effort. It makes us senior citizens proud to think that we are a part of the Farmington and Farmington Hills community.

Our thanks to the crew, the cast, the orchestra, and the merchants who contributed so much to the success of the performance.

Robert and Patsy Wilson,
Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Any feelings on the Detroit newspaper strike?

We asked this question at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library.



"The violence I see on the TV news that isn't right."
Angie Guthrie
Southfield



"We're headed toward a one-paper town, and I wouldn't like that."
Larry Green
Farmington



"I'm not in sympathy with the strikers because of the violence."
Irene Thelsson
Farmington



"I don't read either one of them (Detroit papers). The Ann Arbor News seems to satisfy me."
Herb Hojjes
Chelsea

The Farmington Observer

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— Philip Powers