

# Hills axes tax cut for moving company

By BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills City Council turned down a request from a company moving from the city to Plymouth Township for a tax break.

Michigan law requires approval from the community the business is leaving before its new community can grant a tax break.

The request from Percepton, Inc. would have not affected their move from Research Drive in Farmington Hills, but would have allowed them to get a five-year tax abatement from Plymouth Township. It would not have cost Farmington Hills any lost tax money.

"I would like the council to go on record that 198s (abatements) are not in the best interest of the state," Councilwoman Nancy Bates said. "It puts other businesses in the position of subsidizing their own competition."

The council voted 6-1, with Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi dissenting, to reject the request.

Vagnozzi said he did not like tax abatements for the most part

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unless they would be specifically aimed at helping a city that needed an extra incentive to attract businesses, but he wanted to be consistent.

"I'm not great fan of tax abatements," he said, adding that Percepton had tried to expand or relocate in Farmington Hills before looking elsewhere. "I'd like us to ask the state to end tax abatements. They were supposedly to help cities like Detroit. They've been misused by communities."

Communities can offer a tax abatement, which runs a tax of years at a lower than normal tax rate, as an incentive to attract businesses.

City Attorney John Donohue said at the present time, an appeals court ruling backed the

city council's right to refuse the request.

Alfred Pease, Percepton president and CEO, said the company had doubled its number of employees in three years from 70-140, with the greatest number being from Washtenaw County, to which Plymouth Township is closer.

"We're moving because we are growing by leaps and bounds," he said. "Avoiding taxes is not our primary motive. But we have a fiduciary duty to our shareholders, who are often wives and families with children."

Interim City Manager and City Clerk Kathy Dorman said the Economic Development Corporation and city council should meet in a study session to discuss a policy

regarding industrial facilities exemptions.

In other action, the council: **■** Heard a presentation on the police department's annual report. Police Chief Bill Dwyer said for the 12th year burglaries were down. Serious crimes were also down 2.7 percent despite three homicides, which were all solved.

**■** Heard a request from Richard Tupper and the Rev. Budge Gere representing the Neighborhood House. They are requesting joint funding from Farmington and Farmington Hills for a staff person.

**■** Heard a report from Todd Lips, director of the city's decentralized team program, about the youth program. Two East Middle School students, Matt Dean and David Kinchen, both 13, praised the programs that operated after school at the Costick Center. Lips said the program has been well received.

**■** Discussed community policing with Chief Dwyer who presented a report detailing 38 programs run by the police department that are part of the community policing effort.

# WL Schools look for feedback on 4th bond issue

By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Walled Lake school district residents — including those in the northwest corner of Farmington Hills — might not hold the hammer in determining whether one more bond issue attempt is made.

But they can at least hold the telephone.

Between 7-9 p.m. on Thursday, May 9, the public is invited to call (810)960-8300 and talk directly to members of the Walled Lake Board of Education and discuss the need — and express their opinions — about another bond issue.

Information gathered during the session will be officially presented at the school board's subsequent regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 16 at the Education Services Center.

Officials insist a decision about holding the fourth bond issue since October 1993 has not yet been made. They merely want the public's input before going ahead this time.

"We're trying to gather the information now to see, one, if people are interested in going for the bond and, two, if we do, what things should be included," said veteran school board trustee David Flammer. "We're still in the fact-finding and decision-making stance. Certainly

ly the needs haven't gone away. They just become more pressing as time goes on."


Three bond issues of more than \$100 million have been sent up and shot down by voters: in October 1993; September 1994; and February 1995. Each proposal was intended to find new and improved space to handle a fast-growing enrollment.

"It (the phone-in session) is to help make a decision," said Lois Lange, the district's director of personnel and community relations. "What they learn will be made public."

Although board members will be answering the phone calls, members of the administration, including Superintendent James Geisler, will be available to help answer questions.

Those most certainly will include: When should a bond issue be held? What needs should be addressed in the next bond issue? (Such as student enrollment growth, technology and the condition of aging buildings.)

Flammer said early talks about when a bond issue could be held have focused on a Saturday in late November. But state legislators are discussing whether to require all elections be held on specific dates.



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