

'Needs, wants' cut from Hills' parks, rec plan

By WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

A planned parks and recreation millage renewal for Farmington Hills will provide for the city's many parks and programs, but has already eliminated many "needs and wants."

At a study session Wednesday, Hills city council members reviewed a report by the city's Parks and Recreation Commission concerning a millage proposal that would be voted on in November.

The proposal would renew the current 5 mill tax on Hills residents that is used specifically for parks and recreation facilities and programs.

The current eight-year millage ends in 1999.

The new proposal would generate \$16.5 million over 10 years to pay for debt, the senior program, staffing, the youth program and for many programs under consideration now.

Commission Chairwoman Barbara McCann said after extensive discussions, public sessions and months of work, \$15 million in needs and wishes were identified. The commission narrowed that down to \$18 million, includ-

ing about \$2 million in possible grant money, to fit the amount of money a half mill would generate.

The commission did so using seven assumptions:

- The current half mill would be put to voters for renewal.
- The renewal would be for 10 years, rather than eight.
- The proposal would be on the November ballot.
- The general fund contribution to the operation of the special services department would be continued at an increased level similar to increases made for other city department budgets.
- The ballot proposal should cover not only facilities, but programming costs.
- The recommendation is being made with the knowledge that about \$6 million must be committed from the next 10-year millage to maintain current funding levels for a number of programs initiated under the current parks and recreation millage.
- And that since a half mill over 10 years will generate about \$16.5 million, the additional money (about \$1.5 million)

would have to be made up with grant money.

Special Services Department Director Dan Pottor reviewed the facilities, including Founders Sports Park and the Costick Activities Center, that had been purchased during the life of the current millage. Several programs, including the decentralized youth program, were also initiated under the current millage.

The current millage, which runs from 1991-1999, will generate about \$10.6 million. An additional \$2 million was raised through grants, he said.

City council members had plenty of questions about what the next millage proposal should include, since demand far outstrips the available money, should the millage pass.

Councilman Jerry Ellis questioned the extent to which historic buildings at Heritage Park, including a barn, stable and

caretaker's house, should be improved.

"It's practical to develop buildings considering the ADA (Americans with Disabilities) Act requirements," he said. "I thought we were to preserve and protect them. But using them requires a whole new level of expenditures."

Pottor said that improvements did not have to go so far as to make the historic buildings accessible to the public.

Another consideration will be the use and maintenance of the city's soccer fields. With some 38 fields belonging to the schools and the City of Farmington, Pottor said it was important to maintain the city's fields in case those outside the city's control were not available in the future.

Councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio said she would like to see programs, such as the senior program, go closer to paying its own way, like the city's ice

arena.

The ice arena generates money from its fees to pay on the arena debt and for operating expenses.

City Manager Dan Hobbs said that would not work at the Costick Center because the fees generated aren't nearly enough to cover the debt and operating costs.

Commissioner Stuart Selis said the current policy instituted by the city council, the activities center could not generate money through wedding receptions and other events that the city deemed an infringement on private sector businesses.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said she was concerned that very little was budgeted for the cultural arts program.

Pottor, and Nan Reid, chairwoman of the Farmington Community Arts Council, said the creation of a full-time staff position to manage and coordinate cultural affairs of the city would be a good start.

"We have existed on volunteers," Reid said of the city's cultural arts efforts. "Having a staff position of a full-time staff person to get more grant money."

Councilman Terry Sever said

he was disappointed that the new proposal would not include an aquatic center, a constant need pointed out by residents in surveys.

"I think we could ask for a 12-year millage that included a swimming pool and residents would be more receptive," he said.

Paul Jacques, a commission member and former chairman of the Year 2000 Committee, said although an aquatic center has been needed, the money is well beyond the millage limits.


"That would eat up what we have," said. "But it still has to be addressed."

McCann said the same was true of the ice arena proposal. But a city councilman (Larry Lichtman) took up the cause. She suggested that was the best way to get such a project going.

Ellis suggested contacting a private company that has built aquatic centers in Ohio and New York that have been successful while not burdening taxpayers.

The council took no formal action, but must submit ballot language by June 15 to the city clerk in order to have the issue on the November ballot.

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POLICE AND FIRE CALLS

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

THEFT
In Farmington Hills: A box containing about \$300 in coins was stolen from General Barring on Eight Mile April 29-30.
A \$760 Stahl concrete saw and a \$285 blade were stolen from a residence on Lakeland.
A \$5,827 Hitachi lap-top computer and \$2,000 in software were stolen from a banquet room at the Holiday Inn on 10 Mile May 6-7.
A \$3,160 tennis bracelet was stolen from a bowling bag at the Country Lanes on Nine Mile March 23.
A \$200 cellular phone was stolen from Silverman's on Orchard Lake May 7.

BREAK-INS
In Farmington Hills: A window was broken at J.P.R.A. Archery on Northwestern May 7-8 causing \$500 in damage and a \$2,600 Gateway computer was stolen.
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a Farmington man, 37, for possession of 16 grams of marijuana and drug paraphernalia in a gray 1991 Toyota Corolla at the Putt and Games on Grand River at 10:25 p.m. May 6.

DRUNKEN DRIVING
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a Detroit man, 38, for driving a maroon 1989 Olds 98 east on 12 Mile near Farmington at 2:20 a.m. May 7 while drunk. The driver had a blood alcohol level of .14 percent.
A level of .1 percent is considered too drunk to drive in Michigan.
In Farmington: Farmington police arrested a Redford woman, 27, for drunken driving on Nine Mile and Hawthorne May 7. The driver had a blood alcohol level of .16 percent.

AUTO THEFT
In Farmington Hills: A \$15,000 tan Dodge Grand Caravan was stolen from the Maconson Grill on Northwestern May 6.
A gold 1986 Pontiac 6000 (\$800) was stolen from the Dunkin' Donuts on Grand River May 7.
A blue 1987 Chevy Suburban (\$4,000) was stolen from a driveway on Ontaga May 7-8.
A \$31,000 dark green 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee was stolen from the Kendallwood Apartments on Glen Cove May 7-8.
A Detroit man, 18, and two companions drove a burgundy 1995 Chevy Tahoe to Sunning Acura on Grand River at 12:35 p.m. May 8. The man asked to drive a black 1995 Acura Legend worth \$25,341. He drove it away with one of his companions while the other followed in the Tahoe. They did not return.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
In Farmington Hills: Police arrested a Hills woman, 45, for scratching her son, 26, at his apartment, near Gill and Nine Mile at 8 a.m. May 8.

VANDALISM
In Farmington Hills: A garage door was spray painted, a window was broken and several porcelain figurines were broken (\$1,500) at a house on Woodfarm May 5-6.

OPEN HOUSES
In Farmington Hills: Police will have the help of the popular K-9 unit at the May 18 open house. The 10th annual event, which runs from noon to 4 p.m. at the police station on 11 Mile and Orchard Lake, will feature games, prizes and refreshments.

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