

Learn more about Oakland Schools millages at Monday forum

BY SUE BUCH
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A cluster of tax advocates, largely parent volunteers, will host a forum 7-9 p.m. Monday, Sept. 10, to explain the two separate tax-increase proposals — special education and vocational education — presented by the Oakland County Intermediate School District.

The meeting, which is open to everyone, will be at the Costick Center on 11 Mile west of Mid-dlebelt. It is presented by the Farmington Special Education Forum and the Farmington Area PTA Council.

"Oakland County Schools Superintendent James Redmond is the headliner," said Diana Bauman, director of school and community relations. Farmington School Superintendent Bob Maxfield will also speak.

Voters in 28 Oakland County School districts, including Farmington, will go to the polls Tuesday Sept. 25.

District officials say they need more money for special education than is provided by the state and federal government. The amount of aid has not increased as fast as the costs of the program, officials said.

To get more money for special education, local school districts have tapped into their general operating budgets for up to 60 percent of the cost. Predicted special education programs, according to literature provided by Farmington Schools. The special education tax will be distributed among all the school districts in Oakland County, to

A forum on the Sept. 25 Oakland Schools millage election will be held Monday, Sept. 10, 7-9 p.m., at the William Costick Activities Center.

compensate for those dollars.

The vocational education proposal will provide students with access to the technologies and equipment that are critical to student success in their possible career area, officials said.

The money will be used to improve the four Oakland Technical Centers, make career preparation programs available to all students, and pay for grants to school districts for technical education programs.

Questions at council

Maxfield and school board member Cathy Webb spoke at the Sept. 4 Farmington city council meeting. The literature they distributed didn't contain the cost to residents, as Councilwoman JoAnna McShane asked for that information. She also asked what cuts could be expected if the proposals failed.

"People will want to know that," she said.

Using \$200,000 as the average home price in the Farmington area, Maxfield said residents can expect to pay an annual increase of \$117 for the special education tax and \$22 for the

vocational education tax.

Maxfield and Webb stressed the district's desire to maintain small class sizes, an exemplary fine arts program, athletic opportunities and employee training.

This will be the second time Farmington/Farmington Hills voters go to the polls this year.

The first time was in June to vote for school board members. Voters also approved tax renewals for both the Farmington school district and Oakland Community College.

City of Farmington voters will tread to the polls a third time Nov. 6 to elect three council members. They will also decide if the city should borrow up to \$1.8 million to begin a sewer rehabilitation program.

In the city's tax proposal package, residents would pay \$46 per year on a home that sells for \$200,000.

Noting the city would be presenting information about its millage that night, Webb said that just as the sewer tax request was of paramount interest to the city, the school district's proposal was equally paramount to kids and the school district.

Kim Heath, tax committee co-chairwoman, said in a later interview that a reminder to go to the polls will be mentioned at all PTA meetings, school open houses and in postcards.

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Diversity

ADL director keynotes event

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Guest speaker: Richard Lobenthal will keynote the Mini-Conference on Religious and Cultural Diversity, sponsored by the Multicultural/Multi-racial Community Council.

The program opens at 1 p.m. at the Costick Activities Center; its address is at 1414 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

Lobenthal was director of the ADL from 1982-98. Founded in 1911, the ADL is the world's largest private human relations organization.

Mini-Conference Co-chairwoman Karen Bolten said of Lobenthal, "He spent a lot of time in our community as the former director of the Anti-Defamation League and knows it well. He's seen it from the inside in the diversity community."

The West Bloomfield resident has served as interim director of

ment because the Internet allows the haters to be as creative as the rest of us — people who say 'We'll determine your choices,' Lobenthal said. "I've always been startled by that. It should have been lost years ago from our culture."

Tolerance increasing

But he said some have become far more tolerant since he began his professional life. "You see populations, couples, friends, groups of kids, learn, families that reflect multicultural variety. We've become much more like that, much more accepting of that kind of culture."

Lobenthal is scheduled to speak on religion and how it affects our behavior.

"When I'm talking about religion, I'm really talking about issues of spirituality," Lobenthal said, adding this is a subject applicable to those who identify themselves as part of a faith, and to those who don't.

"Dealing with cultural practices that are not familiar with sometimes is annoying to us, it can be a positive thing only if we can make it so."

In 1989, Lobenthal was a consultant to the Republic of Germany, addressing social problems arising out of German reunification.

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