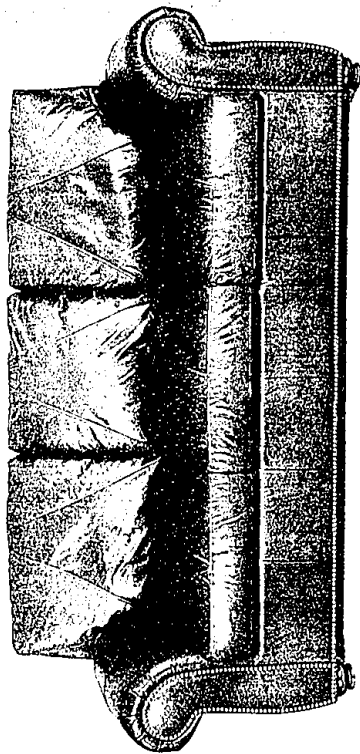


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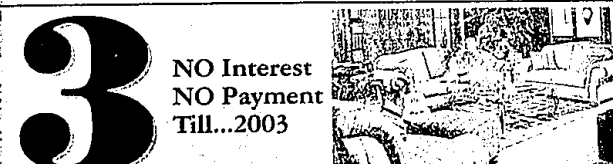


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# Residents suggest privatizing

BY SUE BUCK  
STAFF WRITER

A sparse crowd listened to budget cut proposals May 21 for the Farmington Public School district.

Of about 20 people who attended, half either were employed by or volunteered with the district.

Added revenue of \$200 per pupil announced by Gov. John Engler Feb. 6, while welcome, won't solve an anticipated budget crunch, officials said. Although the amount will decrease the projected deficit of \$6.4 million, the district will still be short \$4 million for the 2002-2003 school year, according to district information.

The district also expects a shortfall for the 2003-2004 school year.

"This is a two-year problem," said Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent of business, finance and operations.

Officials intend to use \$1.2 million from the district's fund balance to reduce the shortfall. This is a one-time only adjustment from the fund balance.

August Blomquist complimented presentations made by Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield, Cannon and Mary Reynolds, business manager.

In answer to Blomquist's comments about efficiency and duplication of services between the local district and the intermediate school district, Maxfield said Oakland Schools is purchasing the 47th District Courthouse on 10 Mile. The facility will be turned over to Farmington for instructional media support in return for access to the Farmington Training Center on Thomas,

Maxfield said.

"It's quid pro quo," he said. Bob Stulberg, a parent of two, asked about outsourcing non-classroom services, like cleaning. "I'm just wondering if this would be cheaper before we cut teachers," he said. "There seems like a lot is being cut: student teacher ratios, other positions which teach our students. Have we looked at reducing other central administration positions?"

The district studied privatization about six years ago, Cannon said. Custodial positions have been reduced in the past. Contracting out bus transportation isn't a good idea because once buses are sold, it's difficult to come up with the money to purchase them again, she said.

Regarding central office staffing cuts, Cannon said last year budgeted positions for a director of student services and accounting supervisor weren't filled.

When an employee in the school/community relations division left, the position wasn't filled, Cannon said.

"We're constantly asking the question, 'Can we do the same thing for less money?'" Maxfield said.

## Field trips

Sharon Russell, an active Longacre Elementary parent, was concerned some children may not be able to afford field trips. Her questions dealt with contracting privately to provide field trip transportation, expanding the range of field trips, issues of liability and allowing parent transportation.

Forest Elementary Principal Lloyd Lewis represented elementary school principals studying the field trip issue. He agreed

proposed reductions will make the situation tighter.

"In my school, we are working with PTAs and we are trying to find additional ways to fund them," Lewis said. "I don't expect and I didn't hear from my colleagues that this will mean a significant decrease in field trips."

Torry Klenczar, director of adult and community education, said the district is looking at grants. One would allow one field trip per elementary school.

## The question of grants

PTA Council President Kim Heath asked whether a seminar could be held for parents to teach them how to look for and write grants. One was offered a few years ago, Cannon said.

Parent Kim Garfinkle asked about establishing a liaison with a university. The Oakland University department where her husband, David, teaches is funded by grants, she said.

Maxfield said the district is somewhat limited in obtaining grants, because it already spends about \$10,000 per student.

Resident Dick Wallace faulted cuts in school bus purchases. "You are merely deferring future expense," he said. "You are not, in any way, reducing future expense. It's a matter of convenience and safety. I don't think this is a savings and should not be labeled as a savings in any way."

Maxfield admitted that administrators have debated this among themselves. He said Cannon comes closer to Wallace's point of view.

"We have done such a good job of replacing eight to 10 buses a year," Maxfield said.

## Budget from page A1

affect classrooms.

To save \$1,333,500, the district will increase classroom staffing ratios from 23:1 to 24:1. The impact will vary by school, depending on schedules and the number of students per grade level.

Reducing three full-time and one half-time extra teaching staff positions at schools will yield a savings of \$525,000. Extra teaching staff are assigned for special purposes within buildings to accommodate specific needs.

Administrative positions have been and will continue to be reviewed for reduction during the year, with a targeted savings of \$200,000. Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business, finance and operations said it's possible there may be no further cuts in this area or reductions may be accomplished through attrition.

Central office staffing was reduced last year when the position of Jim Myers, executive director for K-12 services, was eliminated, and two other positions weren't filled.

There hasn't been an early retirement incentive offered for administrators. "Dr. Maxfield is too fearful half of his administrators will leave," Cannon quipped.

## Restructure, reduce

Restructuring services to school buildings will reduce four instructional support positions housed at the Farmington Training Center and saves \$280,000. However, it's possible that Oakland Schools will contract for

## On the chopping block

■ Supply and purchased service budgets will be reductions: \$500,000

■ Reduction of funds for new and replacement equipment, technology, and school bus replacement: \$895,000

■ Reducing special education resource room positions and a portion of psychologist time: \$207,480

■ Eliminating some clerical and support staff positions: \$200,000

■ Media technician hours will be reduced from eight to six hours per day as well as the two days worked when students are not in session: \$175,000

■ Discontinuing driver's education: \$21,000

■ Eliminating a bilingual paraprofessional position: \$35,000

Instructional services from Farmington, resulting in three reduced positions instead of four, Cannon said.

An allocation of \$5 per pupil will no longer be provided to buildings to help defray the cost of student field trips. "Hopefully the PTA in the buildings will support them or use their per pupil allowance," Cannon said.

In an effort to both reduce duplication of positions and services at the Alameda and Fairview Early Childhood Centers, the district will fill elementary schools first before offering the kindergarten through second

grade program and the early childhood centers. The district targets a \$352,000 savings. Alameda Principal Helene Blackman is expected to retire and Michele Meyers, an administrative intern, is leaving the area.

Implementing a new dial tone service provider for telephone service July 1 will result in a \$90,000 savings. "It will cause a (phone) number change for some of the schools in the north," Cannon said.

The controversial shared-time arrangement with Our Lady of Sorrows School to provide art, music and physical education, would increase revenue by \$225,000. The contract will be discussed again at the April 23 board meeting.

Transportation for secondary students who in the School-of-Choice program will be eliminated to save \$50,000. This will also save time because all secondary students were transported to school 20 minutes before the start of school to accommodate a shuttle going between schools.

The community education program providing preschool, Educare, summer school and community education programs will work toward covering all direct and indirect program costs, a savings of about \$75,000.

The district will continue German and Japanese language instruction at high schools. German will be offered via TV for next year. Japanese language students will be bused to one school for instruction, allowing reduction of a part-time staff person and a savings of \$42,000.

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