

OPENING

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enrolled in a district brings part of a state per-pupil foundation grant when moving to another district. Farmington's foundation grant is \$10,067. The district will receive a maximum of \$9,000 per out-of-district pupil.

Advantages include additional revenue, maintenance of existing programs and staff, consistency in annual planning and maintaining neighborhood schools.

However, officials warn, there is also a down side.

Schools of Choice families do not contribute to taxes, bonds or millages within the community. Community residents often express concerns about the influx of new students. Also, districts can end up "competing" for enrollments, and the addition of more special education students could increase costs.

If more applications are received than there are slots available, a lottery would be held. Students coming into the district would not take slots available for in-district Schools

of Choice, Colliton said.

While in-district Schools of Choice does not offer a preference for students from one family, the out-of-district program would.

Sibling preference begins after a Schools of Choice child has attended at least one semester. The following year, the district would have to give preference to a sibling if a slot is available.

The board will consider the issue of in-district sibling priority in an untelevised committee meeting April 1.

Mary Joyce Reader, principal of Flanders Elementary, and Morawski are co-chairs of a committee that includes Donna Reuter, a student information technician in the Central Office and a Farmington High School parent; Kelly Zubly, a Flanders parent; Ann Marie Kurzyniec, a Flanders media specialist; Kate Harris, a William Grace paraprofessional; and Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business and finance.

Seventeen of 28 districts in the Oakland Schools intermediate district have an out-of-district schools of choice program. The Farmington district

lost 52 students last year to other programs. Of these, 28 went to West Bloomfield, 14 to Southfield, five to Royal Oak, four to Ferndale and one to Berkley.

Committee members interviewed officials from those 17 districts and found they've not only continued with the program but expanded it. Districts had clear guidelines and an application process, which includes expulsion for falsifying information.

Officials also said the MEAP scores and student behavior weren't negatively impacted by the program.

Students who enter the program in elementary school can remain in the district through their senior year, Morawski said. No transportation would be provided.

"We're not looking to overcrowd a school, add classrooms or add staff," Morawski said. "We all like the idea of being cautious."

For more information, to make comments, or to ask questions, contact Morawski at (248) 489-3747 or Reader at (248) 489-3773. shock@hometownlife.com | (248) 477-5450

What's ahead in 2004-2008

The 2004 Farmington Capital Improvement projects include:

■ The Farmington/Evergreen System

Some \$30,000 in 2004 and \$90,000 during 2005-2008 will be applied from the sewer and water fund towards the Evergreen-Farmington System. The western portion of the city is served by this system, which also serves a major portion of Oakland County including West Bloomfield, Southfield and Farmington Hills.

During periods of rainfall, basements have flooded and untreated sanitary water dumped into area rivers and streams.

The Department of Environmental Quality notified Farmington that the flow in the

system within the city boundaries exceeds permitted capacity.

"The city has worked diligently to remove infiltration of ground water and any illegal connections to this sanitary sewer system," the report stated. The city will contribute funds to the overall improvement of the system and continue to work cooperatively with the Oakland County Drain Commission.

■ Resurfacing of the city parking lot on the north side of Grand River, east of Farmington Road and west of Thomas Street

The cost for this project is \$150,000, which would come from the general fund.

■ Complete removal and replacement of the Downtown

Center parking lot at Grand River and Farmington

■ Replacement of a 20-year-old Leaf machine

The 2005-2008 projects are: ■ A new surface for the city municipal parking lot

The lot provides parking across from Liberty and Grand River and serves the library and public areas to the east. Total cost is \$125,000

■ Water meter replacement through attrition

All meters won't have to be removed at one time. Cost is \$90,000 from the water and sewer fund.

■ Equipment replacement

A leaf machine, \$34,000; tractor with rotary mower, \$34,000; and a dump truck with plow and spreader, \$75,000, are included.

PLAN

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city. The city's road improvement program continues through 2008 at an estimated total cost of \$3.3 million. Each year the city repairs an average of four to eight streets.

Funds are provided through a \$1.6 mill levy from a 1994 road millage.

"It uses the funds that this community voted for," said planning commissioner Bill Burke. Burke talked about proposed projects at the Commission's Feb. 10 meeting.

He also warned the list could be affected by state cutbacks.

"A lot of the unknowns involved with the finances which would normally be available from the state, impact what could be done and what could be predicted," Burke said.

Planners make the optimistic assumption that funds will be available because they were available in the past, he added.

Some projects are considered mandatory; others are discretionary and may be put off to another year if funds aren't available.

The projected 2003 improvements are:

■ Shiawassee Road from westerly Farmington Road to Lakeway and Power Road from Grand River to 10 Mile

This portion of Shiawassee Road will be totally reconstructed with concrete curb and gutter and deep strength asphalt pavement. The balance of the project will be milled and resurfaced. The Shiawassee Bridge over the Rouge River will not be included in this project. This project will be scheduled for 2004 with financing available from Act 51 Highway bonds. The total design and construction cost is \$1 million.

■ Farmington Road from Grand River to Shiawassee

This includes total removal and replacement of Farmington Road including the addition of "bumpouts" to provide protected parking, as well as other amenities including tree plantings and impressed colored pavements. An old water main located in the roadway will also be replaced.

Financing for the roadway portion of the project will be provided by the Major Street fund with the water main portion provided from the water and sewer fund. The total design and construction cost is \$440,000. The new water main

will cost \$160,000, which comes from the water and sewer fund.

■ Improvement of park facilities in Shiawassee Park

A volleyball court, viewing stands for baseball fields and replacement of a pedestrian bridge over the Rouge River are included. After evaluation by engineers, it was determined that the bridge deck should be replaced because of deterioration and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

The community's recreation plan anticipates a Michigan Quality of Life grant application, which will be submitted to the state specifically for the bridge improvement. Total cost is \$80,000.

■ Sidewalk program improvements in an area north of Grand River

Part of an on-going sidewalk maintenance program, construction is slated for spring 2004. Total cost is \$150,000.

■ The Pavilion Downtown Center lot on Grand River and Farmington More than

\$160,000 in private donations have been collected for this project. The pavilion is expected to be constructed this year after the Founder's Festival. shock@hometownlife.com | (248) 477-5450

SOLDIERS

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he said. "I don't know if you can ever be 100 percent mentally prepared for it. I've been in the military for 16 years."

Clark's wife, Pandora, and four children - Andrew, Haileigh, Lacie Ryan and Farmington Hills resident Amanda Mudgett - did not attend the ceremony because it would have been too emotional.

The soldiers will remain on American soil, which provided comfort to Heather Phillips of Canton. Her husband is Capt. Glenn Phillips of Company D. "Last year, he served 53 days," she said. "We got used to it. It helps that he's staying in the states."

During Friday's farewell, Heather Phillips cradled their son, 19-month-old Brent, and tried to keep him from running to his father in mid-ceremony.

"He'll get a lot of attention," assured Al Phillips, Brent's grandfather. "He can count on

that." The support of family members like Al and Val Jean Phillips of Livonia and grandmother Sally Holmes made the ceremony that much more moving.

Al Phillips said: "He's well-trained and he and the other captain hand-picked the people in this group. They are the best in their battalion."

That faith and pride was echoed in the voice of Col. Anthony Gratson, commander of the 1st Brigade, 84th Division.

"Your company was selected for this mission because you are the best company in the battalion and you are the best battalion in the brigade," said Gratson, of Rochester Hills. "I know you have performed your duties on a very high level."

He advised the two companies to be flexible and remain focused on their mission though it is 900 miles away from home.

Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey and City Council President Jack Engelbreton - who are both

Air Force veterans - commended the soldiers for their patriotism and family members for their support.

Among the guests were U.S. Rep. Thaddeus G. McCotter, state Rep. John Pastor and state Sen. Laura Toy.

Toy praised the soldiers for their "willingness to protect the greater good of our country."

Brigadier Gen. Steven Thompson of the 84th Division reached out to the soldier's families with thoughts of pride, an assurance that those soldiers would remain safe.

"You are part of our family," he said. "Together, all of us are family, much more than ever before."

Thompson called the mission "an affair of the heart" and said serving your country is one of the "highest callings in life."

"My thoughts will always be with my family," said Clark. "Even though I will be focused on the mission, my thoughts will always be on my family and their welfare." shock@hometownlife.com | (734) 457-2054

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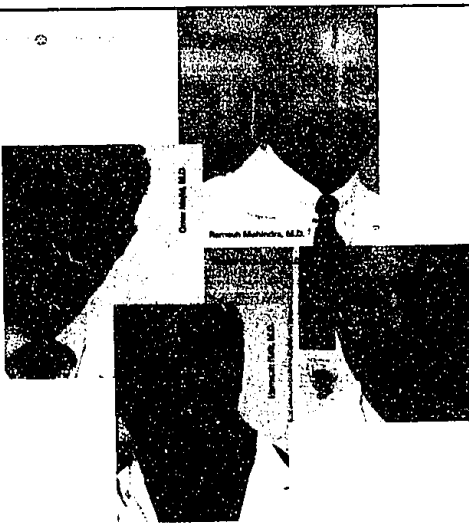
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