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Fifteen Cents

Board trims proposition off special election ballot

By SUSAN AVERILL

Voters will face only two issues on the April 20 millage election ballot, instead of the original three requests proposed by the board of education.

Missing will be proposition three, which asked for a separate one mill increase to be used only for maintenance and supplies throughout the district.

The board decided to remove the proposition after discussion among the board and comments from the audience indicated confusion over the request might lead to defeat of any one or all three of the propositions.

"WE HAVE reached a crisis of crisis," said trustee Dr. Mervyn B. Ross. "I want things to be so clear, so void of confusion so that everyone can make their own decision on what is presented to them."

Aldo Vagnoni of 3818 Kitarian said he was concerned that voters might elect to pass the one mill request through misunderstanding and defeat the other two.

Proposition two proposes a millage increase of two mills and proposition one asks an additional two mills, for a total of four mills. Both requests have 15-year time limits and may be ap-

plied to the academic curricula of the schools. The third proposition, now stricken from the ballot, would appropriate funds solely for building maintenance, repair and supplies.

"If the third becomes an alternative to the first two, then we're in trouble," said Business Manager William C. Prik.

In illustration, trustee Ann Rederwig likened the four mill request to a hamburger, the two mill request to the bun without the meat and the one-mill proposal to a ketchup.

Treasurer William Gravies and secretary Emma Makinen initially disagreed with the notion to remove the third proposition from the ballot.

"I don't see that there have been any changes in the needs or the priorities of this school district from two weeks ago (when the decision was first made)," she said. "It will put us another year behind in textbooks, another year behind in repair. I don't see any opportunities to get it passed at another time."

Another resident suggested removal of the first two propositions from the ballot. The one-mill request would most likely pass with little trouble and set the framework for the passage of higher future millage

requests. Livonia, she said, had passed one mill for maintenance and was able later to persuade the community to vote for 12 more mills.

School board president Gary L. Lichtenman said the decision to review the millage proposal was based on three reasons.

First, he said, many people have questioned whether the four mills and one mill requests were really duplications. Second, he expressed concern that time, money and circumstances might inhibit dissemination of an adequate explanation and interpretation of the request differences.

THIRD, wives might have been crossed between the board and the administration. The administration, he explained, suggested the program in response to an assumed board position, while the board adopted the proposal in response to an assumed and expressed administrative need.

A representative from the Farmington Education Association said his teachers had also had trouble understanding the proposals.

Gravies finally switched sides and voted to remove proposition three from the ballot. Makinen was the only board member to vote against the proposal's removal.



In front of everyone

Michelle Andree of Farmington High School had seven chances to make a free throw when WDR's disc jockeys played the Farmington High faculty Monday night. Miss Andree, nursing a broken finger, missed all seven. Nevertheless, she walked away with a bag of candy — and a good deal of embarrassment. The faculty defeated the deejays, but the big winner was the cancer fund, for which the game was played. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

Council scrutinizes CBD again

By JUDY OWEN

FARMINGTON—A \$21,300 federal grant for community development prompted the city council to take a long, hard look at the central business district.

Through a planning study, the council wants to study buildings on the north side of Grand River between Farmington Road and Warner Street.

The funds come through the three-year Community Development Block Grant Program which allows local government to spend funds for acquisition of property, public works projects, code enforcement, rehabilitation of properties, rehabilitation loans and grants, special projects for the elderly and handicapped, public services, completion of urban renewal and planning and management development.

In addition to the \$7,300 study, the council decided Monday night to spend the remainder of the grant on

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—Councilman Richard Tupper

park improvements and civic center parking improvements.

The planning commission is interviewing planning consultants who specialize in community redevelopment and historical preservation. The commission would then turn over the study to the city council.

"It is the planning commission's intent to view individual parcels of property, keeping in mind the total needs of the Central Business District," said City Manager Robert Deadman.

"THROUGH THE USE of the market analysis and the architectural illus-

trations, they hope to determine the older buildings in the Central Business District that have potential for improvement.

"Once this fact has been determined, the information will be disseminated to the property owners with the hope of persuading individual owners to improve their properties," Deadman said.

Some council men expressed reservations about the \$7,300 cost. "I thought this is the same old thing that we were involved with several years ago when we hired a consultant," William Hartsock said.

The city could spend the money instead for parking and lighting improvements, Deadman said.

"YOU CAN HAVE study upon study, but if you don't have the interest of the property owners involved, it's fruitless," Richard Tupper said.

"You're not going to get complete redevelopment."

"Take the \$7,300 and do what we know has to be done," Tupper said.

Deadman suggested that the council would meet with the property owners. "Some have recognized the potential, others haven't," Deadman said.

"Hopefully, we can get to them and

maybe work to encourage them to improve the tenant mix.

"THERE'S CAREFUL selection (of tenants) at Downtown center," Deadman said. That center is located on the south side of Grand River just east of Farmington Road.

"Is the atmosphere over there such that it's complacent? I'd like to know," Tupper said.

"It has been proven at least to me that anytime city hall got involved with anything that got negative reaction, the question was, 'What are our ulterior motives?'" Tupper said.

Tupper criticized absentee building owners.

Deadman encouraged the council to support the study.

OTHER COMMUNITY development funds to be received for the 1975-76 fiscal year include \$6,700 for improvement at Silverman Park. Improvements suggested include resurfacing the tennis courts or constructing outdoor handball courts.

An added \$1,000 is appropriated for the Violet Street Mini Park for fencing, play equipment, landscaping, picnic tables and barbecue area. The lot was recently acquired from the state department of natural resources.

Another \$5,000 was earmarked as the city's share of the civic center parking lot to be constructed in cooperation with the Farmington Community Library which is under construction on Liberty Street.

Phase II of the grant program will give the city \$40,000 for the 1975-76 fiscal year, and Phase III will provide \$64,000 for the 1977-78 fiscal year.

"EXCELLENT RESPONSE"

was J. Kaminski's response to his Observer & Eccentric Classified Ad. His address:

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Review board tries to help

By JUDY OWEN

"It's a question of trying to have compassion for people and their problems."

This pretty much sums up Robert Dingman's view of his role on the Farmington Hills Board of Review. The three-man board has been meeting this week to hear resident requests for tax relief and, in some cases, lower their taxes.

Sitting with Dingman on the panel are Andrew Sroka and Harold Larson.

THE THREE MEN, all veterans of past boards of review, really don't appear to be as formidable as boards in some other communities.

In fact, as they met with individual residents on an appointment basis, they seemed most approachable.

The reasons for appeal of property assessments varied.

Some sought a reduction because, after everyday expenses of living on an extremely limited income, there was little or no money left to pay the property expenses. Others said taxes drained the finances.

Residents who wanted to remain in their homes even though their prop-

erty had been zoned commercial came to plead their cases. The commercial zoning meant a substantial increase in the assessment.

OTHERS SAID that social security, welfare or pension simply did not provide enough money.

Foremost on their minds was their desire to keep their homes.

The board members patiently explained that for some relief was available under the homestead clause of the Michigan income tax. In some cases, the state refunds the total tax payment.

If a resident files early in January, he can receive the refund in time to pay his taxes.

"It's not open ended in a hardship case," Sroka said. The applicant must renew his plea each year.

"The city retains control over the changes taking place," Larson said.

"SOMETIMES OUR job is one of public relations and explaining to the residents why there is a change in their assessments," Dingman said.

The panel told some residents who objected to assessments that the changes were based on an as-

sorted code used throughout the state.

"Over the years it's been a catch up battle," Sroka said. "It's based on what homes sell for per square foot in our community. The cost of the home should be somewhere the same as what sales are."

Final figures are not tabulated, but this year's turnout appears to be below last year's when 280 residents requested reductions. Of those requests, 145 were granted, the reductions meaning a loss of \$218,300 to the city.

AT PRESENT, the city projects an 11-per cent factor. This could change if the reductions in assessments were significant.

Since the assessments are based on market values, Larson said that he sees one solution to the problem of rising taxes.

"What we've got to do is get people to start buying homes for less than they're paying for them now."

For those not pleased the panel's decision, there is one more step in the appeal process. The property owner can make a written appeal within the next 30 days to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

Harold Larson (left), and Andrew Sroka and Robert Dingman make up the assessing board of review. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)