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Budget slashed \$344,062

District braces for state aid cuts

By RON GARBINSKI

Farmington Schools will lose \$344,062 in state aid payments during the current school year in wake of Governor William Milliken's executive order for state budget reductions.

Under the governor's order, state aid for schools will be cut 17 per cent. This state-wide reduction in aid means that the district must adjust its budget for this school year to compensate for the reduced expenditures.

"It's going to be a tough year for the district," says William Prisk, Farmington School District business manager. "It has been rumored for quite a while that school aid was going to be cut, but we finally received notice of it Wednesday."

"This 17 per cent cut is in addition to the 6 per cent reduction included in the State Aid Act passed by the legislature at the beginning of the school year. We had already built that reduction of \$121,434 into this year's budget. Part of that reduction was taken care

of when we renegotiated teacher contracts for earlier this year.

By combining both the 6 per cent and the 17 per cent cuts in state school aid, Farmington schools will lose \$465,498 in revenues applied to this year's operations.

"This 23 per cent cut is more than the state said we would lose when we started planning the budget for this year," continues Prisk. "And there is a chance of losing more next year. It has been rumored that around April there may be another adjustment."

SINCE THE DISTRICT'S 1975-76 budget provided for an anticipated balance of \$55,660 to be left in its accounts at the end of the school year, reductions of \$344,062 in aid payments will require the district to adjust its budget by \$288,402 just to balance the books as required by state law.

"And that will really hurt us when we begin next school year," explains Prisk. "Not too many businesses start a new year with a zero balance on

their books. That is going to be the biggest problem for us."

"It is really difficult to understand what is happening to the schools and education," says Marjorie Van Ameyde, Farmington District Superintendent. "About the only thing I can tell is that the aid reduction will cut our budget by almost one mill of our operating revenue."

My position as superintendent will be to protect education and try to make budget cuts in other areas where I feel it will not affect the quality of education in the district. But until I get direction from the school board, I don't know if the aid cuts will affect any educational programs.

"Right now I can see where we can take care of about two-thirds to three-fourths of the state aid cuts in non-educational areas. But I must wait for some action and direction from the board before we do anything."

Prisk will present the district's revised state aid payment schedule and its revised budget to the school board

at its regular meeting, 8 p.m., Dec. 16 at the Administrative Building.

This revised budget will show that the district's state aid will amount to \$3,440,308.45 for the current year. In 1974-75, the district received an allowance of \$4,387,725, but that was reduced by an executive order of \$129,510, for a total allowance of \$4,158,215 from the state.

COMBINED WITH A \$16,704,722 property tax levy and other revenues, the district's budget for 1975-76 was \$23,639,000.

My guess is that the district will have to get along on \$22 million next year," says Prisk. "But if we continue the programs we have now, our costs definitely will continue to go up and our budget will be around \$25,400,000. At most, our revenues will be \$24,000,000 and that's \$1,500,000 short of what we need to operate without cutting programs."

"We will have to get the board, the administrative staff and as many other people as we can involved and see where we can cut \$288,402 from our budget," continues Prisk. "I know some areas where we can make cuts in programs or projects, but I don't know where we can get the rest of the money from. We must eliminate costs somewhere and that is going to hurt our district."

Prisk also says that he doesn't see how the budget can be increased next year either. With the state cutting \$715 million from its budget now, additional school aid from the state next year is expected to be minimal.

There are only two solutions to the problem," concludes Van Ameyde. "We either have to cut our programs or increase our revenues. When we talk about increasing revenues, that means increasing property taxes. And nobody wants to see taxes increased."



Helping out

Reading is interesting for Renee Trempe, 6, especially since she has a teacher friend in Sister Rose Henry to help explain it. She is part of the program at the Roman Catholic Church of St. Clare in Farmington. To see how the program works turn to page 3A. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Postmaster reports rush is under control

By CORINNE ABATT

Farmington's new and genial postmaster, Ken Harris, reports the Christmas rush is beautifully under control at the post office.

"Things are going just super," says Harris who took over his job in November of this year. "I am very pleased with the whole operation."

"While it is difficult to compare volume with last year because we had the big snow storm a year ago on Nov. 22, we are down one percent this year in incoming mail volume."

Adding that the post office is down four percent in clerical time and five percent in carrier time this holiday season over last year, he says, "Our heaviest day last year was Dec. 20. We may get a lot of late mailers this year."

"Our peak days will probably be between Dec. 20 and 22. But, we'll have it all delivered by the 24th. So far, not one piece of mail has been delayed and we expect it to stay that way."

WHILE HARRIS SAYS he has five extra persons ready to call if the work gets too heavy, so far, he hasn't needed them. He explains that his regular employees count on working overtime for extra Christmas money.

The question on a new post office building to replace the one on Stoughton and consolidate the operation which is split between that one and the annex on Grand River, is not as simple. "Yes," says Harris, "we do need to replace both buildings."

He favors one large main building in either Farmington or Farmington Hills (no site has been chosen) and a small unit to handle mailing and sale of stamps in the other community. This way each community would have a postal unit, but the shuttling between two buildings handling routes and mail would be eliminated.

Harris says of the Grand River annex, "The lease expires in March of 1977 so we will have to do something."

The present main post office was built in the late '50s, but Harris says that, like so many communities in the metropolitan area, the growth of Farmington and Farmington Hills "was not anticipated."

He says the size of a post office building is based on various things such as population, mail volume, deliveries, percentage of private residences and businesses.

Harris says a recommendation for a new post office already has been sent to the Capital Investment Committee in the regional office in Chicago where the final decision will be made.

FACTS SUBSTANTIATING the need have already gone from Harris to the district office and then to the regional one.

"The capital investment committee has been approached," says Harris. "They are aware of our needs. So is the district and sectional center."

He also is aware that the city of Farmington Hills would like its own zip code number.

"The status of the zip code for Farmington Hills is still indefinite." This year, for a change, postal employees don't anticipate an easy period after the Christmas rush. Postal rates go up Dec. 28. First class rates will jump to 13 cents for the first ounce and 11 cents for the succeeding ones. Post cards will be nine cents after Dec. 28, up from six cents each. Other rates will go up in January.

Harris predicts, "We anticipate getting hit on the 27th and 28th and this is going to be most unusual."

Until statistics come in during 1976, there isn't any way of telling whether the rate increases will have an effect on mail volume. The Farmington postmaster does foresee a drop in third class mail (which some of us non-postal employees refer to as junk mail) because it may be too expensive to produce and send out.

Harris, a career postal employee, lives in Brighton. He previously served as officer in charge of the Plymouth post office and has worked throughout the metropolitan area as a trouble shooter. He began his career with the Southfield post office in 1962.

District educators split on students' basic skills

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Farmington school administrators and some high school teachers disagree on the state of basic skills in the high school with the ability to use basic grammar and arithmetic.

School Supt. Marjorie Van Ameyde believes students today "read and write and do math better than they've ever done." Van Ameyde said that while State Assessment Test (SAT) scores have dropped throughout the country's school districts, Farmington's scores have risen.

"I think our students, as demonstrated by such evidence as we have, are doing better than they've ever done. I am proud of the educational progress our young people make." He explained tests are an unsatisfactory tool in determining how much a student has learned, because test compilers assume certain facts are learned in specific grades. Tests do not always gauge what a child does know.

Some students coming into the Farmington school district have to work to catch up with other students. Van Ameyde said, He believes this shows the progress Farmington students have made in comparison to other districts.

Van Ameyde and Assistant Supt.

Low Scheiman feel that the basics are taught throughout all grades in the school system.

Basics are taught through the 12th grade, Van Ameyde said. In the eleventh grade, students are given a math comprehension test. If they fail, they have the opportunity to take more math courses.

The competency exam may be enlarged to include English, Scheiman said. On the whole, he feels good about the education Farmington students are getting. "I'm not worried about basics."

TEACHERS BELIEVE that the students who are motivated do well in school, on the exams and in vocational training or college.

Mrs. Wilma Gunnerus, business teacher at Farmington High School, said most students don't have the drive or ambition to excel in school. Basing her opinions on observations of students in class, she feels that social pressures and home pressures do not always emphasize education. For a lot of teenagers, social pressure directs them to have a car rather than good grades or comprehension. "It's more important to work at Burger King and earn wheels," she said.

"The highly motivated go to col-

lege. It's the other 60 percent I'm worried about," she said.

Don Soave, a mathematics teacher at Farmington High School, estimated that the math competency test given to high school students deals with seventh grade level material. Two years ago, when last year's seniors were still in the 11th grade, 40 percent of the class couldn't score a passing grade of 65 percent correct, he said.

The minimum typing speed for the classes at the school was lowered because few students could type the 35 words-a-minute necessary to move on from fundamental instruction.

"You can't hold standards like that. There's no carry-over," she explained.

Students don't apply for more advanced classes because they can't meet higher standards. The standards are lowered so the advanced classes can continue.

Teachers complain that poor spelling and reading skills hold back some of their classes.

Joan Bender, a history and Spanish teacher at Farmington High School said she uses junior high level textbooks in one of her American history classes because some of the students had difficulty reading and com-

(Continued on page 4A)



A special operation set up in the Farmington post office to speed holiday mail is run by postal employee Bob Koch. Mail which in non-peak periods would be cancelled at the post office in Royal Oak is being done right in Farmington. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Labor course to be taught

A new course, "Labor Problems," will be offered on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College, Farmington Hills.

It begins Monday evening, Jan. 12, 7:10 p.m. and runs once a week through April 15.

Carl J. Austermiller, associate professor of economics, will teach the course. His professional experience includes employment with the U.S. Department of Labor, Michigan Bell and Armo Steel.

He has also served as economic consultant to the legislature of the Territory of Guam, the U.S. Department of

Labor, the Virgin Islands, the Detroit Police Officers Association and the Michigan Education Association.

Major topics to be covered include a brief history of American trade unions, labor markets, collective bargaining, contract administration, unionism in the public sector and a review of federal and state legislation including the Pension Reform Act.

Registration for the winter semester will be from noon to 8 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 7 and 9 a.m.-8 p.m., on Thursday, Jan. 8 and Friday, Jan. 9.

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LONESOME CHRISTMAS

While most of us enjoy the holidays with friends and relatives, there are some persons who aren't as fortunate. To see how you can help out read Co Abatt's One by One column on Page 12 A.