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Trustees reluctant Schoolcraft tax hike looms

By TIM RICHARD

Voters in the Schoolcraft College district will be asked June 14 to raise the property tax limitation by 0.53 of a mill. The new limit would total 2.13 mills.

Trustees, meeting last Wednesday, had reservations about a millage request when local school districts were also making requests. But as board Chairman Paul V. Kadish summed up:

"We have held off for a couple of years to help Livonia in our case. Plymouth is another. Garden City is another. We can't hold off any longer."

THE COLLEGE district includes the K-12 districts of Clarensville, Garden City, Livonia, Northville and Plymouth.

The vote to make the millage request was 1-0 with Trustee Archibald dissenting. A mill equals \$1 per \$1,000 of a property's state equalized valuation. The owner of a house with a market value of \$20,000 would see his tax bill rise a maximum of \$7.50, of a \$60,000 house, \$22.50.

Voters approved one mill for both operations and debt retirement when they founded the college in 1955. In 1969 they crossed it by 0.17 mill to a total of 1.17. A third proposal was rejected in September 1971.

"THIS WILL BE an all-purpose millage adequate for five years," said Kadish of the new proposal.

As college officials have seen it, Schoolcraft is almost a victim of its own popularity. Early students were largely in liberal arts or general studies and planning to transfer to four-year colleges as juniors. In recent years the majority has registered in more expensive vocational technical programs, and increasing numbers are coming in for community service programs. In the near future, some buildings have begun to show the effects of age and light maintenance budgets. "The need for replacing obsolete equipment" and "the ever-increasing demands of maintaining the physical plant" were cited in the trustees' resolution setting the election.

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WHAT SCHOOLCRAFT is actually getting in property tax revenue is continuing to the public—and embarrassing at times to trustees.

The college has 1.77 mills for all purposes, including operations and debt retirement. But court decisions since the college's founding established that trustees need not ask the voters for millage to retire bonds.

Thus, Schoolcraft has actually been levying 0.53 of a mill over the 1.77 voted limit—a total of 2.13 mills. Even though it's perfectly legal, trustees sometimes refuse to having a gut feeling it's not nice to levy taxes without polling the voters.

The new request, if approved, would raise the voted limitation to 2.13 mills. But by using its authority to raise debt retirement taxes, the board will actually levy 0.53 of a mill beyond the voted limit for a total of 2.66.

So while voters will be approving a 0.53 mill increase, college financial officers figure the actual increase will be 0.40 because the non-voted levy will be cut from 0.53 to 0.13.

THE NEW 0.53 mill will raise \$80,130 in revenue and increase the total property tax yield to \$4.8 million.

College President Kenneth Landner expects Schoolcraft's \$25.7 million in revenue at Farmington when tax bills come out next December. That is because new growth in valuations, which have averaged eight per cent a year, will be offset by an eight per cent loss in the personal property taxes

paid by business under the state's new "single business tax."

Board Vice-chairman Roscoe Raymond was pleased the election was set for June 14, the same date as regular K-12 school elections. "We should make it when the most people vote. Our last turnout on a millage vote was near per cent," he said.

"THERE'S NO DOUBT in my mind that this is a fairly and needed millage raise," said Trustee Gerald Cox. "I hope we have a very aggressive campaign."

Trustee Leroy Bennett insisted President C. Nelson Grate prepare a list of what programs would be cut if the millage bid fails. "I want the public to know what we're going to do if we don't get it," he said, adding that the board should actually go through with the cuts and not simply threaten them.

Bennett and Treasurer Nancy Blatt called it unfortunate the Schoolcraft request was coming on the heels of 17 mill renewal and 2.5 mill new request in the Livonia School District but agreed with Kadish that Schoolcraft had restrained itself long enough.

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Firm must issue pay

The Corneille Kennedy Federal District Court, Michigan ordered King Kar Wash Inc. of Farmington to pay \$4,184.31 in back pay to 37 employees in a wage lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Court granted the Labor Department a permanent injunction prohibiting the Farmington firm from further wage overruns, child labor and record keeping violations.

In its original complaint, the Labor Department charged that the firm failed to pay employees time and a half for overtime, child labor and record keeping violations.

The Labor Department also charged that the corporation was violating child labor laws and failed to keep adequate records of employee wages and hours.

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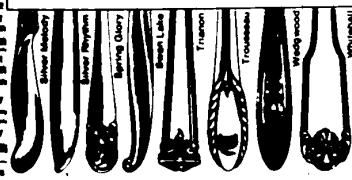


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