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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 2.2 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 one case, Plymouth in another, Garden City in another. We can't hold off any longer."

THE COLLEGE district includes the 13 districts of Clarencenville, Garden City, Livonia, Northville and Plymouth.

The vote to make the millage request was 7-4 with Trustee Arch Valley absent.

A mill equals \$1 per \$1,000 of property.

At 1.7 mills, with a market value of \$50,000 would see his tax bill rise a maximum of \$7.50, or a \$40.00 home, \$10.00.

Voters approved one mill for both operations and debt retirement when they founded the college in 1968. In 1980 they increased it by 0.77 mills to a total of 1.77. 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 school officials have given it, Schoolcraft is almost a victim of its own popularity. Early students were largely in liberal arts or general studies and planned to transfer to four-year colleges as juniors. In recent years the majority has registered in more expensive vocational/technical programs, and the college has expanded its offerings in community service programs.

In the meantime, 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

Farmington Observer & Eccentric

Published every Monday and Thursday by the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 10118 Schoolcraft Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48158. Second-class postage paid at Livonia, Michigan, with additional mail matter postage paid at Farmington Hills, Michigan 48336. Telephone 361-3889.

Co-Publishers
Henry M. Hogan Jr. Philip H. Power

HOME DELIVERY SERVICE
Newstand per copy 25c
Carrier monthly, \$1.00

WHAT SCHOOLCRAFT is actually getting in property tax revenue is conflicting in the public and understanding at times.

The college has 1.7 mills for all purposes, meaning operations and debt retirement. But court decisions since the college's formation established that trustees need not ask the voters for millage to review taxes without polling the voters.

The college has actually been levying 0.33 of a mill over the 1.77 voted initially—a total of 2.13 mills. Even though it's perfectly legal, trustees sometimes confess 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 2.2 mills. But by using its authority to raise debt retirement taxes, the board will actually levy 0.33 of a mill beyond the voted limit for a total of 2.39.

So while voters will be approving a 0.53 mill increase, college financial officers figure the actual increase will be 0.46 because the non-voted levy will be cut from 0.33 to 0.30.

THE NEW 0.53 mill will raise \$80,150 in revenue and increase the total property tax yield to \$4.8 million.

College Vice-President Kenneth Lindner expects Schoolcraft's SEV to remain at \$1.65 million when tax bills come out next December. This is because new growth in validations, which have averaged eight percent a year, will be offset by an eight percent loss in the personal property taxes.

Board Vice-Chairwoman Romeo Ray said the election was set for June 14, the same date as the April 11 school election.

"We should know it when the most people vote. Our last turnout (on a multiple vote) was nine per cent," she said.

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

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

Trustee Leroy Bennett insisted President C. Nelson Grote prepare a list of what programs would be cut if the mileage bid fails. "I want the voters 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.

Board and Treasurer Nance Blatt said, unfortunately, the Schoolcraft request was coming on the heels of 17 mill requests and 33 mill new requests in the Livonia School District, but agreed with Kadish that Schoolcraft had restrained itself enough.

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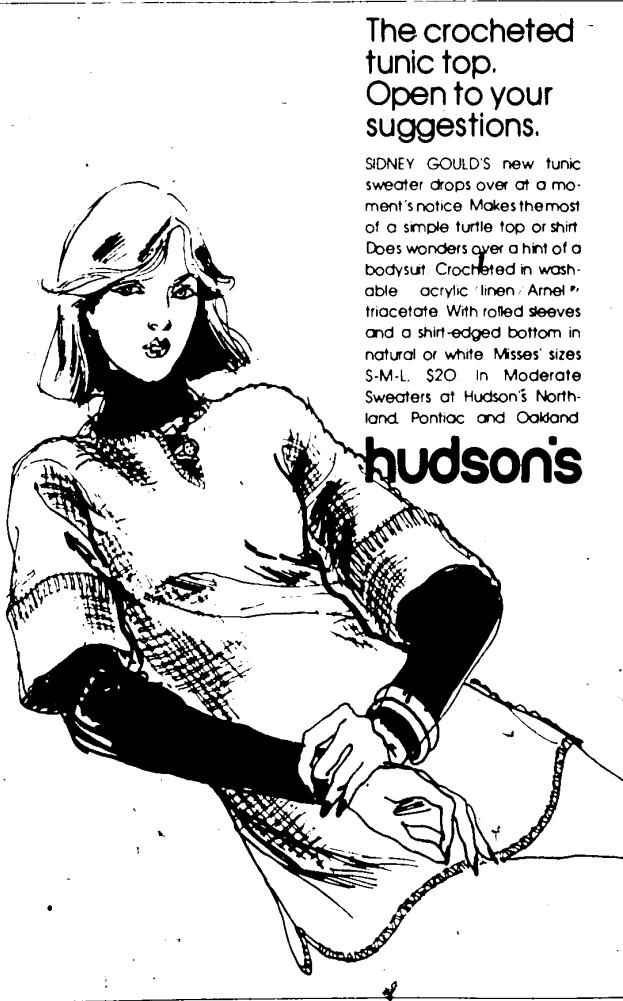
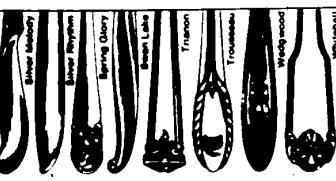
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