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Schulman examines education

By LEWIS SCHULMAN

Superintendent
Farmington Public Schools

While self-congratulation is not necessary, it is important to point out that this school year was one of progress and growth. Any evaluation of the school district is truly an assessment of the whole social, economic and cultural fabric of the community.

Historically, Farmington has been a leader in several areas of education, community education, athletics and physical education, academic instruction and special education.

The elementary program, based on the modified self-contained organization and supported by special learning facilities, has completed a very successful year. There has been further implementation of a fine science program and the introduction of a new social studies curriculum.

The community education department, recently moved to Ten Mile School, has enlarged and improved its program involving an even greater number of adults. The secondary schools continue to offer a full range of academic and vocational programs that relate to future life goals, as well as leisure time.

THE FARMINGTON School District has over 300 students who attend the Area Vocational Center, 322 students in the Co-op program, and 533 graduates (1977) who voluntarily took at least one vocational class.

Our counselors embarked on a self-study to determine how Farmington students fared in national tests (American College Test and Scholastic Aptitude Test). They found that, for the most part, Farmington students graduating from our high schools generally scored above state and national averages. The analysis did highlight the necessity for supportive and additional work in the field of composition and writing.

Probably the most single factor of concern to the school district has been the problem of declining enrollment. Declining enrollment, with its impact on financial support, poses continuing problems.

The school district reacted with long range goals in mind, so that educational programs would be preserved and nurtured, and at the same time, reducing anxiety and trauma for the community and staff.

The board of education moved decisively with a systematic investigation by establishing the Task Force on Declining Enrollment. At a later time, the board created a Task Force on Surplus Properties (who have since reported specific recommendations to sell properties no longer deemed necessary), and a Task Force dealing with reorganization of schools to meet the challenge of declining enrollment.

The past year has seen successful millage campaigns. The increased millage permitted the district to reduce class size and to again fund programs with adequate supplies and equipment. It enabled the district to make needed repairs and to catch up on some postponed maintenance projects.

The school district has been able to embark on a district-wide program for the intellectually gifted. The special education department has converted the closed Farmington Junior High School to the Farmington Training Center. The school district has assumed the educational component at Marillac Hall, a residential facility for unwed mothers.

In addition, arrangements have been completed for the conversion of a portion of the Ten Mile Elementary building for use as a District Court, which will result in a saving to the taxpayers whose taxes support both the schools and the city governments.

IN THE FUTURE it is the goal of the Farmington School District to develop a school system that sustains and fosters a desirable educational climate, motivating students to excel and to accomplish.

As always, proper financing is one of the most significant problems facing the school district. One has only to note that state support of the schools provided 31 per cent of our budget in 1974, and 20 per cent for the 1977-78 school year. This reduction in state aid places more and more reliance on local sources—a fact of life that our community understands. The projected enrollment for 1978-79 is 13,267, a loss of 654 from our present enrollment of 13,941.

Fundamental values are at stake.

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Tiger in winter

A trip to the Detroit Zoo in winter may unearth a world of delights not found in the heat of summer. Bears may be seen with full coats of fur. Polar bears prance in the chilling temperatures. Tigers and lions leave the shelter of rock ledges and find serenity in

open air. Because the zoo attracts fewer crowds in January and February, the spot is ideal for a quiet walk on a winter afternoon. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

Residents give a boot to resolution tradition

With a new year upon them, Farmington residents are foregoing the usual practice of making a few resolutions.

Procrastination or a refusal to make any new promises marked a recent informal survey of Farmington shoppers.

While most of the residents gave the New Year's institution a good anti-tradition knock, a few are struggling to form promises to themselves.

"I'm going to be good to my mother. I've been mean to her," vowed Barbara Schurr, of Farmington Hills.

Brian Kirk, of Farmington Hills, evidently took a look at his pocketbook when he vowed to "try to save money." That was Kirk's resolution last year.

"It never happened," he said.

A PRACTICAL resolution came from Dunckel Junior High student Doug Lindsay who promised "to get my homework done on time."

Last year's resolution was successful, he said. Lindsay promised himself to make more money.

Admitting to procrastinating, Barbara Reynolds, of Coldwater, promised to rid herself of the habit.

Her shopping companion, Joan Courville, of Farmington Hills, admitted to procrastinating about making her New Year's promises.

Although she usually doesn't keep her resolutions, Mary Lorimer of West Bloomfield has promised to lose some weight in the coming year.

"I'll probably plan on cutting down my appetite," said Doreen Lichtman, of Farmington Hills. "I've already exercised for New Year's."

Some residents preferred to avoid the issue.

"I never make any resolutions," said Julie Eneff, of West Bloomfield.

Her response was echoed in a softer manner by Mrs. Virginia Sitter of Farmington Hills.

"I'm so good I don't have to make resolutions," she laughed.

Realist Tom Murphy, of Farmington Hills, avoids the whole issue, too.

"I don't make them because I don't keep them," he said.

"I haven't got around to it. I don't

keep them," echoed Nancy Leighy of Farmington Hills.

Visiting relatives in the area, Mrs. Lenore Amster, of Cleveland, admitted to an aversion against New Year's resolutions.

"I haven't made them. I don't keep them, so I don't bother," she said.



DOREEN LICHTMAN



DOUG LINDSAY



JOAN COURVILLE



BARBARA SCHURR

Home values climb, taxes follow suit

By LYNN ORR

Farmington area homes are selling like hot cakes while prices continue to climb.

That's a good indicator of a thriving community but a bad omen in the tax department, since the higher market values once again are escalating taxes, to the tune of about 10 per cent on the average for 1978, say city assessors.

"This has really been a banner year," says City of Farmington Assessor John Sailer, who's amazed at the steep prices and fast sales the real estate market has experienced in Farmington.

While homeowners can expect steeper taxes, commercial and industrial taxpayers can look forward to slightly less awesome increases, since the market values of those properties have failed to keep up with the skyrocketing prices of homes in what is now considered a prime area.

Like most of Oakland County, the Farmington area saw a real estate boom in 1977, with some homes selling as much as \$10,000-15,000 higher than similar homes sold in 1976. And that trend throughout Oakland County has mandated an increase in property tax assessments from the Oakland County equalization department, the city assessors' watchdog.

THE COUNTY originally tapped the City of Farmington for a 10 per cent rate increase, according to Sailer, however he managed to get that reduced to a seven per cent increase overall.

"We did a sales study on commercial and industrial properties and showed the county our property assessments weren't very far off," he explains.

Sailer agrees with the county's assessment that market values of residential properties have risen dramatically.

"Some of the sales we've received this year show an 18 per cent increase," he explains. And Sailer is attempting to accurately reflect the increases on the tax roll.

"For instance, Floral Park prices didn't change much, but Warner Farms sales showed an 18 per cent increase in one year," he says.

Similar homes sold for about \$37,000 in 1976 and increased to about \$48,000 in 1977 in the subdivision, he adds.

Sailer does his own market studies

to accurately reflect the rising market values, although some assessors simply apply the county's factor across the board.

"IT'S AN EASY" out to take the county's factor," he says. "It's really not fair because some of our areas are growing at different rates."

In Farmington Hills, Assessor Robert Roemer is attempting to reflect accurate market trends while increasing the city's evaluations about nine per cent overall, the county's factor for the Hills this year.

Most of the increases will come in residential properties, he says, while industrial properties, particularly those located in industrial parks, also will be increased.

Likewise in Farmington Hills, Assessor Robert Roemer is attempting to reflect accurate market trends while increasing the city's evaluations about nine per cent overall, the county's factor for the Hills this year.

A nine per cent increase isn't what homeowners should expect, however, he warns. As in the City of Farmington, Hills property values have escalated in some areas and stabilized in others. Roemer won't know exactly where the increases will be felt the hardest, until he receives computer information from Oakland County.

Homeowners can expect official news of individual increases about the first of February, in time to make an appointment with the Boards of Review for appeal in March.

WHILE CITY assessors are required by law to assess real estate at 50 per cent of the market value, individual homes may not always reflect overall increases in the area; and if the Board of Review can be convinced that a home is assessed at more than 50 per cent of its value, a decrease could be in order.

However both Sailer and Roemer choose to increase assessments on their own, rather than applying the county's factor overall, which usually provides for greater accuracy.

If the assessor fails to do his job, the county and/or the state can apply a factor.

"One year Macomb County got a 35 per cent factor from the state," Sailer relates. "Some areas were doing a good job, but some of the farm communities were keeping the value of the land way below its value. The county appealed it and got it reduced a little, but it was still quite a chunk."

McDowell recounts C'ville school year

By SUPT. DAVID B. McDOWELL

Clarencville School District

Clarencville, like many schools in the area and state, continues to have a declining student population. The 1977-78 school year found the district with 198 less students than last year. The 1977-78 enrollment is 2,859 and last year it was 3,057. It is predicted that the enrollment decline will continue at least for the next five years. If the projections are accurate, enrollment in the district will be about 1,670 in the 1982-83 school year.

Efforts have been made to reduce personnel at a rate equal to the loss of students. However, inflation, has worked against us.

The state has not really recognized the dilemma of the declining enrollment districts. The total state aid has decreased annually and the local taxes has had to be increased to meet the additional costs. There is no question that Clarencville

and many other districts will have to solve the financial problem created by decreasing enrollment.

Decreasing enrollment is neither good or bad. It is a different experience and must be dealt with as one would deal with any new experience. Some people may be worried that the district might become too small to remain independent and this is a possibility. However, one should be aware that 53 per cent of all the school districts in Michigan have an enrollment of less than 2,000 students.

Hills council meets

Farmington Hills City Council will conduct a special meeting in council chambers at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 3 in the administration building on Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake Road.

Cozy up to a winter class

An energetic alternative to cozying up to a blazing fireplace on cold winter evenings could be signed up for an evening class.

And the community education department of Farmington Public Schools has compiled a wide range of offerings to tempt even the most sedentary Farmington resident.

Proposed evening classes have limited enrollments, and students are asked to register early to avoid disappointment. Registration can be handled by mail or from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 7-9 p.m. after Jan. 3 at the Ten

Mile Community School, 32789 Ten Mile, east of Farmington Road.

Fees are payable at the time of registration, and mail registrants are asked to attend the first class. Refunds will be granted when classes are cancelled. All other requests for refunds must be made to the Community Education Office before the second class meeting. A \$2 registration fee will be deducted in the case of withdrawal.

A "seasoned citizen" card, available to senior citizens age 60 and over who are school district residents, enables the senior citizen to enjoy free classes

or reduced fees.

All classes begin the week of Jan. 9 and will be conducted at Ten Mile School, unless otherwise indicated.

SPECIAL CLASSES include:
 *Ground school for private pilot rating, 4-10 p.m., Tuesday, Room 7, for 10 weeks; \$30 fee. Course covers the fundamentals of aircraft, pilotage, and radio navigation, including preparation for private pilot FAA written examination. Upon successful completion of course, students will be

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I LAST LOOK

Around the cities, administrators and officials are taking one last look at 1977. For a look at how they viewed the events of the past 12 months, turn to page 3A

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