

City tax up \$25 in new budget

By Craig Plechura
staff writer

Farmingington officials last week announced a \$113 million budget for fiscal year 1981-82, an 11 percent increase over last year's general fund.

The current \$113 million budget on the total value of property will remain unchanged after the annual tax rate of last year from \$1.14.

The increase in the Hills is expected to be an average increase of about 13 percent, said City Assessor Robert Roman. He says property assessments should increase 4 percent.

Last Monday, council members made four amendments to the city manager's recommended budget of \$113,144,555, totaling a \$12,035, to \$123,180,000.

Budgets for general fund of 14 line items of the general fund were reduced and 24 were increased. Budgeted funding was reflected in the budgets of the general government category, city administration, building code enforcement, engineering division, district services, license and permits, recreation, sewer charges and fees.

Increases to the police and fire departments' budgets comprise a large share of the budget increases. The police department budget is \$18,020,319, \$1,000 more than the department requested. To fund crime prevention efforts, this year's police budget is \$12,474 higher than last year's appropriation. The fire department request is \$11,319,821 and received \$11,008,309.

The largest reductions came in the categories of engineering and building code enforcement.

CUTBACKS in engineering and code enforcement "are directly associated with the decline in new development and construction," explained City Manager Lawrence Savage.

Personnel reductions include the elimination of one building inspector, one recreation programmer and three full-time engineering site positions.

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Restaurant fire 'suspicious'

By Craig Plechura
staff writer

An early morning fire on Monday that police call "suspicious" caused extensive damage to the Glass Onion restaurant, 11415 Grand Hills, Farmington.

Police and fire officials said a break in also was reported in connection with the fire. Restaurant owner Dave Sinicola reported being in the neighborhood of 11,000 in cash, said Sgt. Norman Maddison, Farmington fire marshal. No estimate of damage to the building was available.

Sinicola owns the restaurant business but Maddison said the HBC Investment Co. of Southfield is the owner of the leased building.

The fire was discovered at 5:19 a.m. by Farmington Public Safety officials eating dinner, who was patrolling the area in his squad car. Savage said in a message to the council. The 1981-82 budget contains approximately 1 percent of the total budget for purposes of capital outlay.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS that are budgeted include \$3,437 for work on improvements to the station No. 1, 2 and 3. Boilers and heating systems will be replaced at station No. 1 and 2. Another \$10,550 will be budgeted to pay off the remaining debt for a new pumper truck purchased in 1980 and \$18,550 will go toward replacing the chassis of a rescue unit in station No. 3.

But department requests for three additional fire fighters and the establishment of three sergeants have been delayed until the department finds a new chief and asks him to make recommendations on personnel, said Savage.

City Council members made relatively few changes in the budget proposed by the city manager. However one area they increased by \$3,000 was the appropriation set aside for conferences and workshops. The budget now includes \$5,000 for conference fees.

The council increased parks and recreation beyond what was suggested by the city manager by \$7,035. Council members added \$28,524 for administration of parks and recreation activities.

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building. The rear door of the building was found open by officers responding to the blaze, investigators said.

A quart container found inside the building is being analyzed at the Michigan State Police laboratory for traces of gasoline or another flammable substance.

There was a B&E (breaking and entering), Maddison said. The cause of the fire is undetermined. I'll go as far as to say it's suspicious at this point but I won't go so far as to use the word arson.

CALLING A FIRE "suspicious" is the polite term used by officers conducting an arson investigation, said Public Safety Director Robert Seifert.

"Until we have something to work with we'll have to go with that term," Seifert said. "We're waiting to get an analysis of that quart. If we find something more definite than 'suspicious' we can go beyond that."

Contacted outside the burned out restaurant, owner Sinicola said he did not know why anyone would want to set fire to the restaurant.

"I've got no idea," Sinicola said. "You'll have to talk to them (fire investigators). I don't know how it started or if it was started."

Sinicola said that shortly after new employees filed in January came to the restaurant that night seeking back payment of wages Sinicola said he was threatened by the pair who were gone from the restaurant when police began the investigation.

The restaurant, which employs 30 persons, opened under current ownership on April 1, 1980, according to city records. It is not known at this time whether Sinicola will reopen his building but fire officials say the building can be reopened after renovation.

The fire started in a storage room, a fire department said.

The area where the fire originated was in the storage room where papers, records, plastic, styrofoam trays — things that relate to the restaurant business — were stored."



Hills firefighter Chris DeForge cleans rubble in the aftermath of the fire that gutted the Glass Onion restaurant.

Maddison said.

An office located in the center of the restaurant, near the east wall was broken into before the blaze, the fire marshal said.

"The fire itself was confined to the rear portion of the building, the area around the storage room," Maddison said. "The building is intact except for the rear door."

Damage to the building included structural steel near the ceiling that was buckled by the heat. All of the building suffered smoke damage, and there was heat damage in the kitchen area. Windows in the ceiling area were broken out by police to release smoke and gas. Tables and chairs were covered with heavy soot.

On Monday after the fire Sinicola returned to the restaurant looking for his insurance policy in the rubble. He walked out with the paperwork.

Firefighters extinguished the flames in 15 minutes using three engine trucks, an aerial tower truck, eight Farmington Hills firefighters and 24 city public safety officers. The fire was under control at 5:45 a.m., Maddison said.

Family heads for Texas in a well-documented journey



Robert Wahrenbrock, his daughter, Mindy, 4, and Smokey, the family pet, will be driving down to Texas this weekend in this van.

By Craig Plechura
staff writer

The job interviews in Dallas were no problem for Robert Wahrenbrock. The press interviews were another story.

Wahrenbrock, 29, of Farmington Hills, has been the subject of a continuing series of articles on "the search for a new life in the Sun Belt" written by Iver Peterson and published in the national edition of the New York Times.

Peterson met Wahrenbrock at one of his many stops at the Little Professor Bookstore in Dearborn, where Houston and Dallas newspapers outside Detroit papers by a 5-to-1 margin until recently, when sales dropped off drastically, said bookstore manager Nancy Colbert.

Wahrenbrock made weekly trips to the bookstore since December. By going to the store he ended up being interviewed by reporters for ABC News 20/20, National Public Radio, NBC, CBS and the New York Times. The Times reporter hitched a ride with Wahrenbrock last week when the Farmington Hills man went to Dallas looking for work.

He found a job and a home in 4 1/2 days. He and his wife, Patricia and 4-year-old daughter, Mindy, are moving to Dallas this weekend. Their unaided home on Albion, west of Middlebelt, is for sale and a friend of theirs will house-sit the home until it is sold. In the interim, the Wahrenbrocks will be paying \$495 rent on a home in Dallas in addition to their monthly mortgage on the home in Farmington Hills.

IF IT ALL sounds rather abrupt, Wahrenbrock says that's because it is "a real wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am kind of affair."

He's scheduled to work Tuesday as an inspector at the Electronic Flow Meter company in Dallas. Two days ago was when he returned from the job hunt in Dallas. That afternoon he quit his job at Gam-Rad Inc. of Novi, a firm he's phasing out. His division of electronic testing devices. The same day he and his wife, Patricia, were working frantically, packing boxes and wondering what they'd do with all the stuff stored above the garage door.

Mrs. Wahrenbrock got off the telephone, saying to her mother was successful in his Sun-Belt job search.

"They didn't think he'd find a job down there," Mrs. Wahrenbrock said. "They thought it'd blow over. Bob has attacks of wanting to do something new every so often. They thought this was just one of those attacks."

"But I'm ready for a change. New friends, a new place, a new city."

Asked if she'd miss anything about the Farmington area, Mrs. Wahrenbrock laughed and said, "Bates hamburgers."

Her husband said that while the timetable for relocating has been hasty, he's planned for the last six years to move out of Michigan.

"If there's one thing I'm going to miss about Michigan, I'll be asking in

winter," Wahrenbrock said. "The first snow of the winter. I always like it — the first one — but that's it. Snow comes once every six years down there and that'll be soon enough for me to see a snowflake."

THE ATTITUDE of people he met in the south was much more upbeat than the prevailing attitude around Michigan, Wahrenbrock said.

"Everyone smiles, everyone's so doggone friendly," he said of Texans. "Even in a bar people are talking to you, drinking with you. Here, everybody gets drunk as a skunk, scowls and cries in their beer."

Farmington Hills residents, said Wahrenbrock, "are what I call 'skyhooks.' They've got their nose in the air because they live in Farmington or Farmington Hills instead of some other city around here."

A "positive attitude" is something Wahrenbrock tries to cultivate despite bitterness toward his home state. He lists his completion of a Dale Carnegie course on the professionally prepared resume he submitted to 11 firms in Dallas.

As advice to others contemplating job-seeking in Texas, Wahrenbrock recommends paying for the services of an employment counselor. In his case, a counselor helped to draw up an opening letter, a resume that emphasizing strong points and taught him techniques of "maintaining control" in the

crucial, face-to-face job interviews.

IN THE INTERVIEW where he landed a job, Wahrenbrock said he told the firm's vice president that he didn't mind starting out in a lower position than he is already holds. He plans a quick move up to engineer and, as a long-range goal, to get involved in sales of the company's water quality monitoring devices.

Other Michiganders interested in finding a job in the Sun Belt should have professional experience or a skilled trade, Wahrenbrock says.

"And forget the phone calls," he urges. "Trying to get through to talk to some of these executives is like trying to get through to the King of Siam. Their secretaries are very defensive."

Eleven letters were sent to firms in the Dallas area before anyone invited Wahrenbrock to come down for an interview. Wahrenbrock also consulted a reputable employment agency in Dallas to arrange interviews. The agency he found his job through charges the employer, not the employee, for its head-hunting services. Other firms which ask job-seekers to pay are called "byster outfits" by Wahrenbrock.

The hassle of finding a new job and leaving his home state of 29 years will be worth it, Wahrenbrock says, when he's settled in his new home listening to country singer Willie Nelson croon as he and his new friends share a six-pack of Lone Star beer.

Residents lose zoning battle

By Mary Lou Callaway
special writer

Rezoning of 61 acres of single family residential land at 14 Mile and Haggerty was approved 4-3 by the West Bloomfield Township Board Monday.

The parcels, owned separately by Robert and Richard Rowd (44 acres) and William Clair (17 acres), have been discussed for nearly two years.

The developers now have approval to go ahead with a mixture of business and multiple family uses.

Architect Leonard Segal showed drawings for a proposed shopping center to serve the area, which borders Novi and Commerce townships and

Farmington Hills.

Last month, the township planning commission recommended the rezoning by consensus.

But dissenting board members Andrew Lobodocky, Thomas Law and Dennis Vatisa on Monday questioned rezoning before the master plan is updated as "putting the cart before the horse."

"What's the big rub?" questioned Vatisa.

"They (commissioners) did what you wanted," said Trustee Raymond Holland, who also serves on the planning commission as a board representative.

LAST YEAR, the board sent the rezoning matter back to the planners, asking them to consider the entire stretch along the Haggerty Road corridor as it relates to the ongoing master plan update.

The commission has been discussing the update for several months but public hearings have not been scheduled except for isolated parcels such as the Rosin-Calk pieces.

Planning Director Frank Reynolds said the master plan update will take several more months.

A delay in the final decision on M-275 through western Oakland County pushed back the timetable for the proposed alternatives to the Northwestern Highway extension decision, which will

affect the update, Reynolds said.

Those favoring the rezoning argued Monday that intensive commercial and office development in Commerce Township to the west make the business-multiple zoning in West Bloomfield logical.

"Then it would be a self-fulfilling prophecy," objected Vatisa. "We do it because they (other communities) do it. Our side of Haggerty should be the buffer. Office use would be better than a shopping center."

The other four board members agreed with the planning commission's recommendation of rezoning as "in

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