

New programs up Farmington Hills budget

At least one Farmington Hills resident believes city officials should think carefully about how and what they spend in the coming fiscal year.

"The city of Farmington Hills is trying to be everything to everybody," Freshbrook Drive resident Wayne Haydel said June 12 at a public hearing on the \$26.4 million budget. The Farmington Hills City Council approved the budget in a 7-0 vote following the public hearing.

Haydel questioned some new programs established by the city council and financed in the new budget. He also questioned the amount of staff in some programs, particularly the city's senior adult programs.

It's time the necessity of many city programs are questioned because taxes "will force people out of their homes. You're really going to drive people away," Haydel said.

THE ADOPTED budget represents a \$161,012 increase over one proposed by City Manager William Costick.

In dollars, the increase includes:

- the addition of two police officers (in addition to two recommended by Costick) at a total of \$70,512.
- a third magistrate for the 47th District Court at \$10,000.
- a new teen program estimated at \$5,000.
- \$5,000 in overtime for the planning and community development department.
- a \$500 donation to Common Ground.

The new programs will be financed from the city's surplus, as well as money received from the state for a documented population increase and from franchise fees the city receives from its 15-year franchise with cable company, MetroVision of Oakland County.

THE NEW budget calls for hiring a total of four new police officers, one for patrol and traffic, another for the detective bureau and the two requested by the city council, to be used in patrolling neighborhoods. One full-time firefighter, a foreman in the Department of Public Works, an additional building inspector, a librarian and covering a part-time person to full-time in the personnel office.

The budget for the new fiscal year, beginning July 1, represents a 9.1 percent increase over the current 1988-89 budget.

Though \$200,000 has already been budgeted for construction of specific sidewalks, the city council received a petition from residents requesting a new sidewalk along Farmington Road, between 12 and 13 Mile.

"I would gladly pay higher taxes for more sidewalks," New Bradford Street resident Joyce Regan said.

The city council told Regan the request would be put on a future council agenda for discussion. "Hopefully, we'll have a good audit and funds will be available," Mayor Terry Sever said.

In addition to the new programs,

personnel costs and trash removal account for a good part of the total budget increase.

PERSONNEL services represent 57 percent, or approximately \$15 million of the new budget. Increasing refuse costs represent 11 percent of the overall 9.1 percent increase over the current budget, finance director Charles Rosch said.

Employee wages are expected to increase 4 percent — according to existing labor contracts with the city's six labor unions. A major increase in the coming year will be seen in employee health insurance benefits.

Michigan Blue Cross/Blue Shield increased rates 28 percent, or \$249,000, for 1989-90. In 1988-89, insurance rates increased 30 percent. City Manager William Costick plans to investigate alternatives to either stabilize, if not decrease, health insurance premium costs.

Mirroring past years, the city's garbage disposal costs are again increasing from \$1.5 million in 1988-89 to \$1.8 million in 1989-90. The greatest increases are in tipping fees or the cost of disposing garbage at landfills. In the past 15 years, tipping fees have increased 1,000 percent, Costick said.

Tax rollback may not benefit all

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills residents' cries for tax relief didn't fall on deaf ears. But not all will benefit from a 6.1 percent city tax rate rollback in 1989 designed to offset increased property tax assessments.

The city council June 12 adopted a \$26.4 million budget — a 9.1 percent increase over 1988-89 — supported by a tax rate of 8.8 mills.

As promised, city administrators rolled back the city's tax rate from 9.4 mills this year to 8.8 mills in 1989 to offset the average 6.3 percent property tax assessment increase.

City officials rolled back the rate to the level where those property owners who received the average assessment increase won't pay more in city taxes in 1989-90.

In other words, the city is using only the increase in state equalized value to offset the increase rather than taking revenue generated from increased property tax assessments. The city's SEV on new construction is \$104 million. The city's total SEV increased to \$1.77 billion in 1988-89 to \$1.99 billion in 1989-90.

But a lot of residential property owners won't benefit from the tax rollback because it is based on the average 6.3 percent property assessment increase. Commercial property increased an average 9.4 percent.

The average assessment increase is the average between the city's property categories, including residential at 9.4 percent. Commercial increased an average 1.4 percent, industrial, 6.5 percent personal property, 7.6.

HOMEOWNERS FACED with the average 9.4 increase will likely pay a little more in taxes despite the rollback. For example, a \$100,000 house that would in 1989 have a selling price of \$109,400, would be assessed at \$124,700.

At the 1988-89 tax rate of 9.4 mills, the resident would have paid \$470 in city taxes compared to the \$483 they would pay on the 1989-90 rolled back rate of 8.8 mills. This does not include taxes levied by the Farmington Public Schools, Oakland County, Oakland Community College or Oakland Intermediate School District.

The scenario differs when taking the same \$100,000 house and increasing the assessment by the city-wide 6.3 percent average increase. In 1989, the house's selling price would increase to \$108,200 and the assessment would increase from \$99,000 to \$106,512 in 1989.

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Some city council members have complained that the rollback will not generate the intended effect for homeowners. City Manager William Costick agreed that in the short term, residential property owners are being hit the hardest. Residential property taxes comprise 59.7 percent of the city's tax base.

City assessor Dean Rabb said two years ago, the situation was reversed with commercial slumped by an average 38 percent increase and industrial with an average 28 percent increase.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

● **CASE MOVED**
A 12-year-old boy charged with raping a 12-year-old girl in the woods at a Farmington Hills home for abused, neglected and emotionally disturbed children will be tried in Wayne County.

At a pretrial hearing Tuesday, Oakland County Probate Court Juvenile Referee Joseph Rancey granted a request by defense attorney Michael Batchelor of Detroit to waive the case to Wayne County.

Waiver was sought because the boy is from that county and because another case involving him is pending there, Farmington Hills detective Rose Luttrell said. Neither the police nor Oakland County assistant prosecutor Leonard Gorz objected to the request, Luttrell said.

The suspect faces one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, which involves penetration, and one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, which involves contact. Up to six other boys may have witnessed the May 3 sexual attack, which occurred while the girl and the boys were truant on the grounds of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, 27400 12 Mile, police said.

The suspect came to the center as a temporary ward of the court last June. The victim came to the center as a permanent ward of the court in December. Both are from Detroit.

The rape is the first such incident

at the 60-year-old center. In light of the incident, the center has re-evaluated placement, truancy and teaching policies.

● **STRONG ARM ROBBERY**
A 15-year-old Farmington Hills man was assaulted and robbed as he was stopped at a traffic light in Farmington early in the morning June 14. The injuries required eight stitches to his lip and five stitches to his tongue at Nov's Providence Hospital Center.

According to a Farmington Department of Public Safety report: The man was on his way home from work at 12:30 a.m. After stopping for gas, he was stopped for a light at Grand River and Freedom Road, where a man came to the open driver's window and began punching the victim in the face. The man from the man's workplace was reported stolen.

Police are investigating.

The sign was valued at \$180. The five-foot-tall cherry tree sustained \$250 in damage.

Approximately \$100 in cash was reported stolen from a residence at Farmington Mobile Home Park on Middlebelt in Farmington Hills June 12-14.

A TV, a pellet gun and cash valued at \$625 were reported stolen from a house on the 12200 block of Folsom in Farmington Hills June 14.

A moped and patio set valued at \$2,400 was reported stolen from a residence on Riverbend June 14-15.

A radar detector valued at \$150 was reported stolen from a vehicle at Chatham Hills Apartments in Farmington June 14. An estimated \$100 in damage was done to the car window.

● **CAR RECOVERED**
A 1988 Buick Century stolen from the parking lot at Stark & Co., 30301 Northwestern Highway, Tuesday was recovered in Troy the same day. The car was valued at \$15,000, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

● **THEFTS REPORTED**
A "stork" sign announcing the birth of a boy was stolen from in front of a house on Kingston in Farmington Hills Wednesday. The sign was chained to a dwarf figure tree, which was cut to take the sign.

Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-840)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eclectic Newspapers, 205 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Second-class postage paid at Birmingham, MI 48009. Address all mail (subscription, change of address, Form 3589) to P.O. Box 2428, Livonia, MI 48151. Telephone 521-5500.

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