

# Voters to decide how to pay for sewer project

## Election is May 22

By Casey Hans  
Staff writer

Will Farmington voters pay for a \$12-million sewer separation and improvement program through debt millage on property taxes or through an increased water and sewer usage fee?

That is what voters in the older community of Farmington will decide during a special election on Tuesday, May 22, as officials move quickly ahead in planning the project — the largest and costliest in the city's history.

Either way, residents will pay. "We're in a very, very tough period, asking people to increase property taxes," said City Manager Robert Deadman. "It's a dirty word."

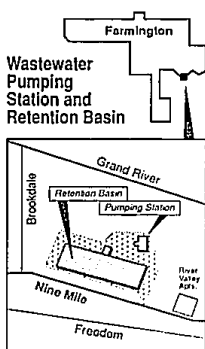
But if residents reject the \$12 million general obligation bond proposal, they will pay for it just the same. City officials stress that at least property taxes are tax deductible when filing federal income taxes for taxpayers who itemize. Water and sewer rate fees are not.

The project is expected to cost each household between \$120 and \$210 per year for the next 20 years. How much each resident pays will depend on how voters choose to pay for the project, and how much water they use if usage fees increase.

Farmington is one of 47 Michigan communities in the three-county Rouge River Basin that must come to grips with the river's pollution. The project is a necessary component of Farmington's efforts to comply with federal and state mandates to clean up the Rouge.

THE PROJECT is expected to start this year and take 18 months to complete. Cleanup will last another six months.

An estimated 50,000 feet of new line pipe will be laid, causing roads in the city to be torn up. A new 3.2-million-gallon concrete underground retention tank will also be built on the dirt portion of Nine Mile to hold excess sewer water until it can be



sent to Detroit for treatment. That will replace a current tank, which holds only 150,000 gallons.

The project will ultimately separate and improve the combined portion of the city's older sewer system. Now, during heavy rains, sewage and storm water goes into the Rouge River because the system is not designed to handle the overflows.

Although only a portion of the city has combined sewers, Deadman stressed that the entire city will benefit from the system upgrades.

The project was originally earmarked at \$9.6 million when approved by the city council last November. City officials soon found after tests on the system that other work was needed. Now estimated to cost \$11.2 million, the city is asking for up to \$12 million to allow for flexibility on the project.

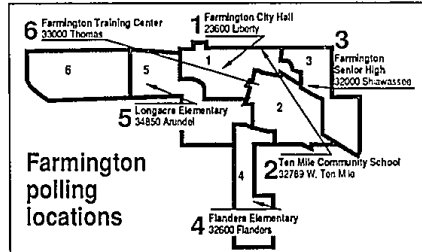
THE CITY has received approval on a 2 percent loan through the Michigan Revolving Fund Loan Program, which is expected to save the city more than \$7 million in interest over the 20-year life of the bonds.

The city's bonding attorneys have developed a debt service schedule that begins with interest-only payments during construction and with interest and principal payments beginning in the 1991-92 budget year.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Farmington City Manager Bob Deadman (left) and Earl Billing, public service director, review the site of the planned new concrete retention basin on the dirt stretch of Nine Mile, southwest of Grand River and Orchard Lake Road, Monday afternoon.



## Ballot language:

Ballot language for the special election on Tuesday, May 22, when Farmington voters will consider a major sewer improvement project:

"Shall the City of Farmington, County of Oakland, Michigan, borrow the principal amount of not to exceed Twelve Million Dollars (\$12,000,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds therefor, for the purpose of paying all or a part of the cost of

acquiring and constructing improvements to the City's sewage disposal system consisting generally of an approximately 3.2 million gallon retention facility, new sanitary and storm sewer lines and repair and upgrade of existing sanitary lines and existing sewerage pump stations in the city of Farmington together with all appurtenances and attachments reasonably necessary therefor?"

## Residents query officials on plans for sewer work

Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman said he "doesn't have a feel" for how residents will vote in the upcoming special sewer improvement election, but said he is fielding lots of questions at city hall.

"Most of the calls . . . are not a great deal about the need," he said this week. "Most people are convinced there's a need to do the project."

"The talk is about how we pay for it."

The city will ask voters to approve up to \$12 million in general obligation bonds during a special election Tuesday, May 22, to separate and improve the city's sewer system and build a multi-million-gallon retention tank. The improvements come on the heels of clean water and air mandates from federal and state government.

The city council held an information session Monday to again describe the project and its impact on the city. About 20 residents appeared to ask questions and hear about the project. The information was previously presented at a required public hearing in March.

Mayor Shirley Richardson said she had not received any calls from the community, but several residents told her they had received a professionally done flyer, which describes the project and its costs.

THE FLYER referred to the project as an "Environmental Improvement Program," explains the construction, a history of the system and payment choices. "A 'yes' vote means Farmington citizens pay for the sewer improvements by raising the local property tax rate. A 'no' vote means Farmington citizens pay for the sewer

improvements by raising water and sewerage rates," the flyer said.

A total of 5,000 flyers were mailed out to residents and businesses, according to Deadman.

Historically, the Farmington sewer system began as individual septic fields to treat sanitary flow. As these fields failed, residents hooked into the city's storm sewer system. According to Deadman, the state disallowed this practice and ordered Farmington to hook into Detroit's treatment system in 1953.

Farmington then built a 150,000-gallon, storm-water retention facility, which will be obsolete when the new 3.2-million gallon tank is built under the new project.

"It was then innovative," Deadman said. "But today, it no longer meets the combined sewer treatment requirements established by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency."

Deadman said although most residents seem to understand the environmental need for the project, many had specific questions Monday. They wanted to know if their street was going to be torn up by the construction, how the system would operate in the future and the costs for that, and how the financing would work.

Others were concerned about the odor that might surround the retention tank. Deadman assured residents the tank would be required to be operated with a charcoal-filtered system to control the odor, and would be completely automated.

Absentee voter ballots are available by calling City Clerk Jo Bushey's office: 474-5590.

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## Church schedules open house to show off new Hills building

An open house will be 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Sunday, May 6, at the Detroit First Church of the Nazarene to show the new Farmington Hills facility to neighbors and passing motorists.

The church is on a hill facing I-275, north of Eight Mile.

A formal dedication will be announced later when the expansion is completed. But the finishing touches are far enough along to offer a sneak preview for folks who have asked what the construction is all about.

Sunday, visitors may walk through the sanctuary, Christian Education rooms and children's facilities, or pause at the glass-enclosed atrium with the stained glass crosses facing the freeway and Hagerly.

Refreshments will be served and casual entertainment provided. On hand to greet visitors and answer questions will be senior pastor Holland Lewis, assistant pastor David Caudle, youth pastor David Mason, children's minister Sharon Pila,

staff members and laymen.

Immediately after the open house, First Church will have its first worship service in the new sanctuary, beginning at 10:50 a.m. Visitors are welcome.

MARKING ITS 70th anniversary in 1990, First Church of the Nazarene was chartered in Detroit and was in several locations throughout the city during its first 50 years.

After meeting at temporary sites in Livonia and Farmington Hills, the church moved to its present location 10 years ago.

Because of its urban roots, the church has long-time members from Detroit, Dearborn, Redford, Grosse Ile, Allen Park, Southgate, Livonia, Birmingham, West Bloomfield, Pontiac, Southfield, Warren, Plymouth, Canton, Northville, Howell, Brighton, South Lyon and Milford.

But because it is in the prime growth area of the I-275 corridor, the church draws its largest numbers from Novi and Farmington

Hills. The congregation numbers about 700 in Sunday attendance.

DETROIT First Church of the Nazarene is part of the Nazarene denomination, headquartered in Kansas City. An evangelical church, the denomination traces its historical journey in faith to John Wesley.

The local church offers a range of activities for adults, children and teenagers.

They include separate infant and toddler nurseries, Christian education classes, a mid-week Bible study, Ladies Bible Study, men's prayer groups, Boys Brigade and Girls Pioneer Scouting-like programs, Work and Witness teams that annually spend a week or more in South America or Africa mission fields, a prison ministry, a caring ministry for the needy in the Detroit area, a full music and drama ministry, and other community outreach programs, in addition to regular Sunday morning worship time and Sunday evening family hour.

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