

School leaders hope Proposal A brings stability

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Schools initial budget is soundly in hand. Fingers holding the document tremble slightly, though.

The fiscal outline for 1993-94 is straightforward. The district expects to receive \$88,420,847 in revenue and spend \$88,936,855.

An over-expenditure of \$516,008 will come out of the fund balance.

A public hearing will take place Tuesday, May 18. State law requires a budget be in place June 30.

Due to a healthy fund balance of \$16 million, those figures should remain relatively intact whether or not Proposal A passes June 2.

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Cathleen Webb
Farmington schools trustee

Beyond 1993-94, though, all bets are off.

"If Proposal A doesn't pass, we really don't know what to expect," said assistant superintendent for finance Bruce Barrett. "We expect property tax relief to occur one way or another."

Passage of Proposal A would leave the district's \$7,713 per pupil spending unharmed in the

first year. The district would become an in-formula district, receiving state money generated from a 2-cent increase in the sales tax to make up for losses in property tax revenue.

The property tax rate would drop 31.5 to 27 mills; assessment increases would be held to 5 percent or the rate of inflation. While the funding structure

would radically change, the difference in revenues for the 1993-94 budget period would be less than 1 percent, Barrett said.

The district doesn't expect costs to change. The bulk of the 1993-94 general operating fund will go toward salaries.

The budget allocates \$56.3 million in employee compensation. Employee benefits take up another \$11 million.

Also, \$16.9 million is earmarked for supplies and other equipment, while capital outlay projects are expected to cost \$4.5 million.

The 1993-94 budget marks a \$5,370,762 increase from the \$83,566,093 budget from 1992-93.

However, the district received \$87,316,448 in revenues. The ex-

cess of \$3,749,355 was added to the fund balance.

The fund balance gives the district some breathing room. That, and \$7 million in cuts made during 1991 when recapture depleted the schools of state revenue, has helped stabilize finances.

That's the good news. The bad news could come after June 2. If Proposal A fails, the district may be subject to the whims of the state legislature, which could enact some other form of property tax relief.

Barrett said one reform possibility is the House version of Proposal A, which included the option of levying a local income tax.

Or, there was the Senate's idea of decreasing assessment ratio with option of asking voters for more mills.

"Both prospects are untenable in most school districts in the state," Barrett said. Not surprisingly, board members took up the chorus for Proposal A at the May 4 meeting.

"I don't think we can stress this enough," said trustee Cathleen Webb. "It's good for our district. It's good for our kids. It's good for taxpayers."

"This seems to be our last chance. . . . I think it's one window of opportunity to put school finance behind us."

Carriers ready for very special delivery

On Saturday, May 15, Farmington-area letter carriers will be collecting and delivering more than just mail.

As part of a joint program between the United States Postal Service and the National Association of Letter Carriers, May 15 has been designated "National Food Drive Day."

Farmington postmaster Mark Bate describes the event as "a way our communities can lend their support to those in need."

"All of our letter carriers will be

collecting donated non-perishable items from residents' mailboxes on May 15 for distribution and delivery to Farmington and Farmington Hills charitable organizations," Bate said.

Bate added that these organizations are all located and serve in the community and are associated with either the Cleaners Food Bank or the Oakland County Food Bank. They include the Farmington Nursing Home, Boy's Republic, Sarah Fisher, Salvation Army and St. Alexander's Church.

Letter carrier steward Charlotte Ott said, "Although the food drive is a national program, we feel all donations from our customers should be provided to local charities."

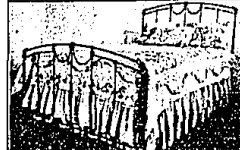
"We ask that all residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills place any items for donation in their mailbox, if at the curb. If this mailbox is located on their porch, simply leave all items on their porch for collection by your carriers."

Donated non-perishable items

can also be brought to both the Farmington and Farmington Hills post offices from May 10-15. Bate said, "We will have hampers in our lobbies during the week to collect donated items." Bate said the Postal Service is pleased to support this program with the assistance of the letter carriers.

"Our employees look forward to assist the local charities and those in need and hope to collect a large quantity of items from our customers' mailboxes."

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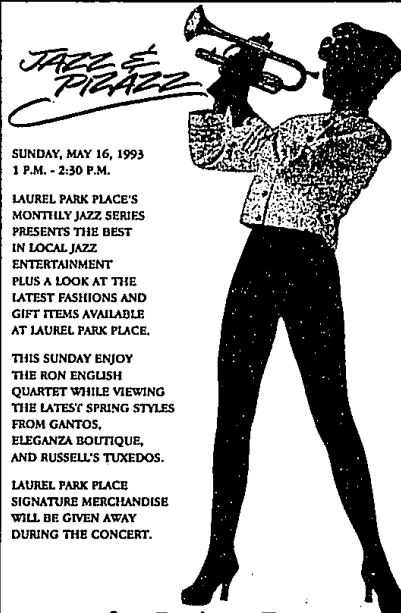


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