

PROPERTY TAX AX?

Legislation passed this week by the state Senate and House would eliminate property tax as a source of revenue for the schools. Michigan schools spend nearly \$9 billion a year on their operations. \$5.6 billion comes from property taxes while \$3.5 billion is provided through state aid. The legislation would not affect county, city, township, village, community college, special assessment or school bond property taxes.

Legislature's millage slash stuns schools

BY TIM RICHARD and LARRY O'CONNOR STAFF WRITERS

Farmlington Public School District officials are assessing the latest Lansing bombshell on funding.

In a surprise move, state senators late Tuesday night voted to eliminate local property taxes as the chief means of operating public schools. Their deed was echoed by the House in the clear of day on Wednesday.

Jan Dolan, R-Farmlington Hills, voted for the measure but perhaps with some misgivings. "I feel like I've gone off the high board, and I hope there's water in the pool."

"We're not going to shut down the schools. That's not going to happen. But we've got to come up with a funding mechanism."

They didn't decide how the lost \$5.6 billion in local revenue would be replaced. Most likely candidates: an income tax increase, a voter-approved sales tax increase, liquor and cigarette tax increases.

"It's shocking to hear they are talking about totally wiping it out when they're not at the same time talking reimbursement," said Farmlington school board president Cathleen Webb.

"They've got to have that in the back of their mind. They're going to have to step up to it."

Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmlington Hills, was one of the four to vote no on the bill, which passed 33-4.

"All of this is just pie in the sky," said Faxon, after the 11 p.m. vote Tuesday.

Faxon predicted "incredible harm" to suburban districts because some lost revenue wouldn't be made up.

"We promised too much," agreed Sen. William Faust, D-Westland. "It's too large a bite without telling how the revenue would be made up."

Faust disliked cutting business taxes along with residential.

"The train was on the tracks, and it's running without brakes," said Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham. "Everybody believes the property tax needs to be removed as the sole source of funding. But I'm going to be one loud voice we do not destroy good districts and begin the largest Robin Hood plan we've ever seen."

"If the House passes it in its present form," Sen. Robert Geake, R-Northville, said before Wednesday's vote, "then the Legislature looks for replacement money. School aid is unaffected. Most legislators have found their constituents want massive property tax relief."

Voting yes from the Observer & Eccentric area: Republicans Bouchard, Mat Dunaskis of Lake Orion, Geake, David Honigman of West Bloomfield and Democrat George Z. Hart of Dearborn. Voting no: Democrats Faxon and Faust. The other two no votes came from outstate Republicans Harry Geak of St. Joseph and John Schwarz of Battle Creek.

The House approved the bill Wednesday on a 69 to 35 vote with six absent. The bill went back to the Senate for concurrence in two amendments, and then to Gov. John Engler's desk for signing. All Observer & Eccentric representatives voted yes except Democrats Justine Berns of Westland and William Keith of Garden City. Maxine Beriman, D-Southfield, was out of town and missed the vote. Voting yes were 52 Republicans and 17 Democrats. Opposed were two Republicans and 33 Democrats.

On board are both Republican Gov. John Engler and Sen. Debbie Stabenow. D-Lansing, a declared candidate. Democrats gave Stabenow high visibility by letting her sponsor the substitute version of Senate Board 1.

An evening Senate session followed nearly three hours of negotiations between Engler and the "quadrant" — GOP and Democratic leaders from both chambers. The new SB 1 emerged as a total surprise.

"I think it's interesting. It's politics at its best," Webb said.

"It's pretty bizarre to say the least. Maybe they're trying to shock each other into reality. I don't know."

Richardson says no to 2nd term



BY LARRY O'CONNOR STAFF WRITER

Citing the need to pursue other interests, Farmlington councilwoman Shirley Richardson is not seeking a second term.

Richardson made the announcement during Monday's city council meeting. The news surprised many. Richardson has been a council

member since 1988 and has been involved in a myriad of community service for more than 26 years.

She has the distinction of being the first woman to serve on both the council and as mayor in Farmlington.

Her interest in the city hasn't waned, she said. Other time commitments, though, would make it difficult to run a campaign.

"In the coming four months, I will be intending to serve out my term with the same interest and enthusiasm that I had seven years ago," said Richardson during Monday's meeting.

Council seat open

Her announcement leaves one uncontested seat in this year's election. Incumbents Richard Tupper and Arnold Campbell have picked up petitions in the city clerk's office and are expected to run for re-election.

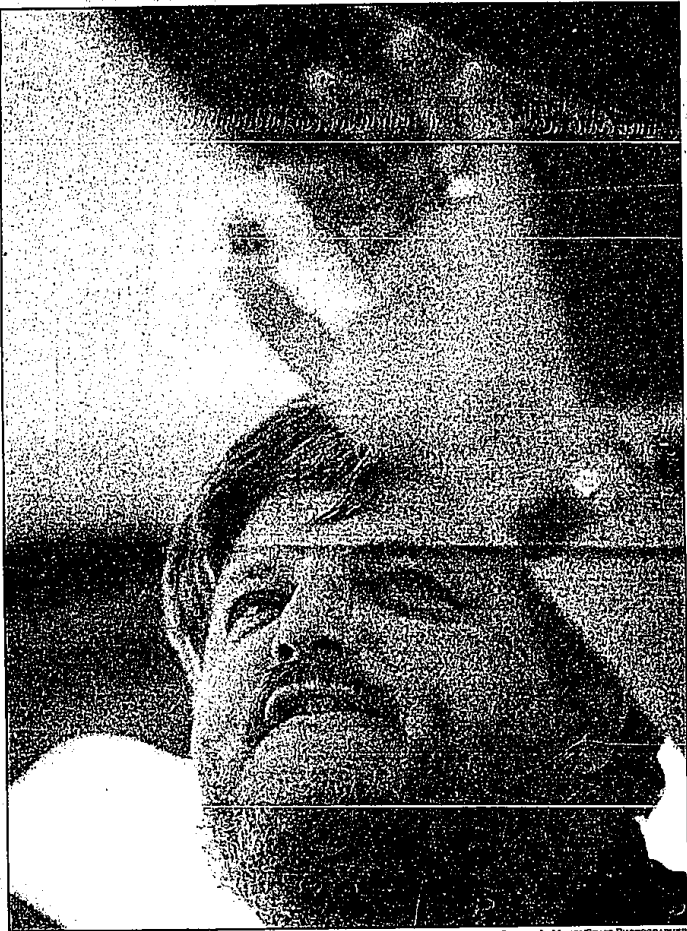
Deadline for candidates to file is Aug. 13.

Richardson, 68, was appointed to council after Alton Bennett left in 1988. In 1989, she was elected to a four-year term after receiving the highest number of votes in the city election.

She was also elected as mayor by council members in 1989, serving a two-year term.

Her tenure on council has been marked by a concern over the city's aesthetic attributes. She's spoken out on such things as signs, fences and even the look of city hall itself.

See RICHARDSON, 2A



Bingo man: Norman Logan, director of the Farmlington High band, calls the numbers at the bingo game during the Farmlington Founders Festival last week.

Festival attracts 85,000

BY LARRY O'CONNOR STAFF WRITER

Everyone from city workers to visitors who just wanted to beat summer's doldrums found the 29th Annual Founders Festival a rip-roaring success.

An estimated 85,000 people descended on the streets of Farmlington and Farmlington Hills during the three-day event.

Sunshine, 80-degree temperatures and blue skies decided to join the party as well.

"It was really great. We had three wonderful days of weather," said Farmlington/Farmlington Hills Chamber of Commerce director Jody Soronen. "We had terrific crowds. You could hardly walk down the street."

Waves of traffic

Don't bother telling that to those at the Farmlington Public Safety Department, the Farmlington Hills Police Department or the Department of Public Services.

They dealt with the waves of traffic, pedestrians and the clean-up afterwards. But they were giving the event a thumbs up, too.

Officers from the Farmlington Public Safety Department were on full shifts. Aside from a few parking complaints, there was no serious crime.

Police even provided a demonstration on arrest techniques when a pair of car thieves decided to visit the festival on Friday.

A Geo Metro was reported stolen from Independence Green Apartments in Farmlington Hills. Farmlington Public Safety officer Robert Schulz noticed the car stopped at the light on Grand River and Farmlington and apprehended the driver. Farmlington Hills police later arrested a passenger who fled.

A round of applause went up from festival-goers as the officer handcuffed the suspect.

See FESTIVAL, 10A

Hills council wary of cluster housing plan

BY BILL COUTANT STAFF WRITER

As Farmlington Hills becomes more filled up, leftover plots of land can present developers and the city with some real challenges.

"That was the case for one developer at Monday's regular city council meeting. Mark Dickow, who had gained approval for development of a

cluster site plan on his property on the west side of Middlebelt north of 12 Mile from the city planning commission, will have to rework his site plan before the city council is likely to approve it.

"This is like trying to squeeze a size-12 foot into a size-6 shoe," said councilman Aldo Vagnozzi.

Dickow is planning to build 12

houses of approximately 1,700-2,100 square feet on the property. But because of a planned stockade fence for a retention pond, trees and an east-west street to serve the development, there would be little space between the project and neighboring condominiums and apartments to the south.

"This would be a nuisance to prop-

erty owners to the south," said Leonard Satz, who lives in an apartment development near the proposed site. "We'd be subjected to car lights shining into our bedroom windows and more noise."

Masha Silver, who lives in the Beachwood Hill condominiums, 2A

See DEVELOPMENT, 2A

And the winner isn't . . .

Members of the Farmlington Hills City Council had to laugh as they heard a much younger political hopeful confess to an error in strategy at a recent meeting.

Adam Garbooshian, Boy's State representative from Farmlington Hills, thanked the council for sponsoring him for a week at the Lansing convention last month. Students from across the state spent a week learning about government by coming up with their own version of it.

But, alas, the 16-year-old suffered the fate shared by many who run unsuccessfully for office. "I think I tried to stick to my own ideas and that was why I didn't get elected," said the North Farmlington student.

But Garbooshian, who was later elected to other posts, seemed to take the defeat with good humor.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

And council members, who have sometimes made the same mistake, seemed to be laughing with him, not at him.

Choir to perform

The 60-member Youth Choir from Oak Ridge, Tenn., will sing at the First Presbyterian Church, located behind the construction at 11 Mile and Farmlington roads, at 10:30 a.m. Sunday. The public is invited to attend. The concert follows the 9:30 a.m. service at the church.

Memory Lane

From the July 23, 1953 edition of the Farmlington Enterprise:

■ A fire at the Lakeway Drive-In on Grand River in Farmlington caused about \$5,000 worth of damage, fire officials said.

■ The Farmlington City Council earmarked \$12,000 from a budget surplus for the purchase of a new fire truck.

■ Equipment and furniture were being moved to the new Farmlington High School on Shiawassee, according to G.V. Harrison, principal.

■ Don Kegey of the Little League Giants was the league's top pitcher with a 3-1 record.

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