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One immediate challenge for Maxfield is to step out of the shadow of his predecessor.

Michael Flanagan, who left to become superintendent of Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency, was highly regarded in the community. It's something Maxfield is aware of.

"I told Mike one day, 'I'm kind of tired of people of saying 'You'll be almost as good as Mike,' like I'm following a legend here,'" Maxfield said. "He said 'you missed something.' He said 'what you've missed is that you're going to bring things I didn't bring to this. You're going to bring things that weren't necessarily my strengths.'"

Strong on instruction
Flanagan had a strong financial

background. Maxfield's expertise lies more in the area of instruction. He serves as an education leader at Eastern Michigan University and did his doctoral dissertation on "Management by Objectives & Curriculum Development: A Study of Theoretical Relationships and Actual Applications."

Maxfield said his success as Farmington superintendent depends on how he develops. At Berkley, with less administrative staff, he's had to take more of a hands-on role.

He sees one task as maintaining the sound fiscal practices established during Flanagan's tenure. He thinks that will be somewhat easier with the school funding picture clearer than it was a few months ago.

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tion, abandoning its 11 Mile store. She added that two other businesses at 12 and Middlebelt would likely follow.

But Jenna said Kroger had told him they were not interested in the 12 Mile and Middlebelt location.

Mayor Larry Lichtman said the study session was just that, and not a meeting that called for a vote on the project.

But planning commission chairman Paul Blizman said the strong opposition should be taken as a sign of things to come.

"Under the circumstances, I would not recommend that you go and spend any more money on this project," Blizman said.

The next step in the process of approving or rejecting the project would be a public hearing before the planning commission, said city attorney John Donohue.

"Whether the planning commission recommended approval or not, it would still go before council," he said.

To many attending the session, having to attend more sessions to voice the same disapproval did not sit well.

And several residents said they see a subtle threat inherent in Jenna's request.

"This is a selection of evils," said Celest McDermott. "It amounts to: Take this option for fear something worse could come."

Some type of development will indeed likely be built at the location, said councilman Terry Sever. The housing density and size of the shopping centers could be negotiated rather than simply accepted or rejected, he said.

"We all understand something is going there some day," Sever said.

Regardless of what happens with the March 15 ballot proposal, Farmington will have to live within its current budget, Maxfield said.

"Does that mean there will be some cuts at some time? Sure it does," Maxfield said. "At some point it's going to translate into spending less money because certain things are going to go up more than inflation. It's a lot better than a couple of scenarios that were out there for out-of-formula districts where they were proposing 20 to 30 percent."

"I think people get the impression I'm coming in as the budget-cutting superintendent. That's not the mandate I sense at all."

Working with outsiders

Maxfield also intends on taking advantage of inroads Flanagan made going outside education circles to involve people such as members of the chamber of commerce.

That also means dealing with the segment who are not happy

with the schools.

"I don't think you co-opt them. They know when you try to co-opt them," Maxfield said. "Virtually every case you have, you can find middle ground."

"Every now and then, and I remember this as a principal, there is a time when you say 'We've given it our best shot. We'll keep working with your child, but we can't cope with you anymore. You're expending too much of our time.' You're not going to win everyone over."



C. Robert Maxfield


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Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-040)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009-0910. Second class postage paid at Farmington, MI 48009-0910. Postmaster: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric, Newspapers 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009-0910. Telephone 644-1100.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(elsewhere in Michigan) \$36.00
Per copy, 50¢
One year \$36.00
One year \$36.00
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