

Ice arena ballot issue running hot, cold

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

With time short before Tuesday's primary, supporters of a ballot issue that would pay for a new multi-purpose ice arena are hoping that voters aren't cool to the idea.

So far, few have stepped forward in opposition to the arena, which would be built at Founders Sports Park on Eight Mile. But that is not a comfort to supporters.

"I'm afraid of that silence," said Susan McKendrick, a supporter of the arena plan. "If no-

voters are out there in any number, they are quiet."

But some residents were willing to talk about their reasons for opposing the project.

"This is something that should be put out for bid by a private company," said Hills resident Ray Okonaki. "I've been in business all my life. And if what they (Say Yes to the Ice Arena Committee) say (arena is in demand) is true, it can be done privately. If no private concern will build it, that should tell you something."

Okonaki said the city should stick to essential services, such as fire, police and garbage pickup,

and leave the rest to the private sector.

"All these other former communist countries are going to the free enterprise system and we're going the other way," he said.

Olde Town resident and community activist Masale Kurseja said she is concerned that the arena is a "fill" the city can't afford.

"I just feel we have too many other things like Marcy Center and fire and police needs," said the 34-year resident.

Those favoring the arena say it won't cost taxpayers because the debt would be paid off from the proceeds and if there were a short-

fall, it would only come in the first few years of the arena's operation, costing taxpayers little.

"Hopefully it will pass," said Pete Jona, an arena supporter and amateur hockey player. "I'd say 90 percent of the people I've talked to want it. The people who don't are people who wouldn't use it."

Dennis Fitzgerald, chairman of the committee, said feedback has been positive.

"The questions we've had have been informed questions, as if it is already a reality," he said. "I hope they're right."

Arena, House seat primary questions for voters

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Whether it's the 37th District State House race, a proposal for a bond issue to build an ice arena or the races for the U.S. Senate, absentee balloting appears heavier this year than two years ago in Farmington and Farmington Hills

for the Aug. 2 primary.

Hills assistant city clerk Sus Rose said 6,900 absentee ballots were mailed out for this year's primary as compared to 6,541 two years ago. She estimated that about 2,000 had been returned as of Wednesday. In March, 7,622 absentee ballots were sent out for

a special election for Proposal A, which passed by a 2-1 margin statewide.

Farmington city clerk/treasurer Patsy Cantrell said absentee ballot requests were up in Farmington as well with 639 mailed out this year as compared with 385 in August of 1992.

In both cities, absentee voters can return the ballots up until the polls close at 8 p.m. Tuesday. Polls are open for voting from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. in both cities. Voting precincts will be the same as in the March election.

See PRIMARY, 10A

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