

9-of-10 go for vacancy rule

By Bill Costant

Talk about a mandate! Farmington Hills voters left no doubt that they want a voice in who sits on the city council at the first opportunity.

They voted by an 85.5 percent majority to approve a charter amendment that will give them the opportunity to vote to fill vacant council seats at the next general primary or general election.

By 11,607 to 1,955, voters passed the amendment. And the timing could not have been better, since with the election of Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi as mayor, voters will have a

chance to take advantage of the amendment in August 1996. The amendment provides that after a council member quits, as in the case of Vagnozzi who had two years remaining in his city council term, voters can select a successor at the next general election, either in August or November.

Newly-elected Mayor Vagnozzi said he will sit down with the new council and consider how to select a council member to replace him.

"I'll meet with the council and get a consensus of how to fill the vacancy," he said. "My suggestion is that we ask possible candidates to appear before us in open interviews (public sessions)."

Defeated mayoral candidate Paul Soverby, who had been appointed to the council in 1989 to fill out a term, said he did not expect to be considered.

Defeated council members Ben Marks and Dennis Fitzgerald said they would be interested.

"Yes, I would be interested to serve if they asked," Marks said. Fitzgerald said he was not only interested in filling the opening, also thinks he may run for the seat in August of 1996.

"I learned a lot in this campaign and got a lot of experience," Fitzgerald said. "I don't want to let it go to waste."

Millage from page 1A

needs," Dwyer said. "Certainly we're pleased with being able to put more cars on the road."

The tax money will also fund the construction of a permanently manned, centrally located fire station near City Hall at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake. Fire Chief Richard Marinucci said he hopes to start construction on that building by July.

The city's current four fire stations are located near the outskirts of Farmington Hills.

"I think the community's got pretty good faith in the police and fire departments," said Marinucci. "I think the citizen committee did a very good job of getting the undecided people convinced."

The millage will also allow the fire department to double the number of full-time firefighters from 16 to 32, said Lt. Tom Shurtleff of the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

Many of those new hires will staff the new fire station, he said. The department is currently staffed by a combination of full-time and paid on-call firefighters.

Shurtleff, a member of Citizens for a Safer Farmington Hills, said he spent many hours during the last few weeks walking neighborhoods and making phone calls to urge voters to support the millage.

"We're a darn good fire department, but we can't keep up," Shurtleff said.

The millage will help shift the burden of nonessential calls from on-call to full-time firefighters, he said. Some on-call firefighters now are pulled out of bed six or seven times a night to respond to non-emergency calls, he said. "It drains them," Shurtleff said.

But not all residents were happy about the passage of the tax increase. Charles Egan, one member of

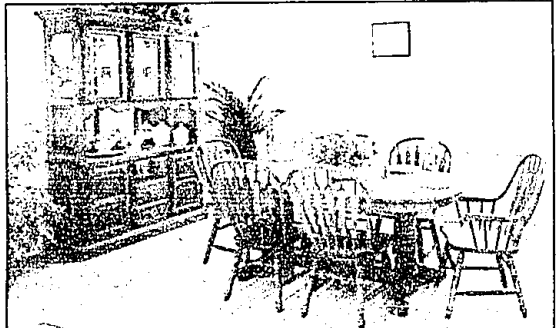
Citizens for Fiscal Responsibility, a group that had opposed the measure, said the city should have increased its public safety budget every year instead of asking voters to implement higher taxes.

"This tax will never come off," Egan said. "If they go ahead with what they are doing, they'll need the tax for the firemen and policemen."

Egan said his group is not against the police and fire departments, but rather wants the city to re-evaluate its priorities and its budget.

The group was critical of the tax's backers, who laid out specific plans for the first five years of the millage, but not the second five years. Members also thought the increase was too high, and called the 10-year millage a "permanent increase," based on the likelihood of a proposal to renew the tax when it runs out.

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Police from page 5A

and a level of .01 is considered too drunk to drive for any driver under 21.

Farmington Hills police arrested a Commerce Township man, 25, for driving a gray 1985 Dodge west on Grand River at 8:56 p.m. Nov. 3 while drunk. The car was weaving at the time.

Farmington Hills police arrested a Hills man, 63, for driving a 1984 Cadillac Eldorado after the car was involved in an accident at 10 Mile and Springland in Farmington Hills Nov. 5. The man fled the accident on foot, but was picked up by police. He had a cut on his head and was taken to Botsford General Hospital where

blood was drawn.

Farmington police arrested a Detroit man, 51, for driving through a red light at Orchard Lake and Grand River at 12:53 a.m. Nov. 5 while drunk. The car was swerving. The driver's blood alcohol level registered as .15 and .14 percent in two tests. A level of .1 percent is considered too drunk to drive in Michigan.

Farmington police arrested a Farmington man, 43, for driving east on Grand River at 1:18 a.m. Nov. 5 while drunk. The driver's blood alcohol level registered as .24 percent and .22 percent in two tests.

Farmington police arrested a

Farmington Hills woman, 20, for driving south on Mooney at 2:55 a.m. Nov. 5 while drunk. The driver's blood alcohol level registered as .13 percent and .12 percent in two tests.

AUTO THEFT
Farmington Hills police arrested a Hills boy, 16, for stealing a brown 1989 Dodge Aries worth \$2,000 at the Commerce Bank on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

A \$10,000 1991 black Ford Mustang was stolen from the Polo Club Apartments on Polo Club in Farmington Hills Nov. 4.

A blue 1979 Olds Cutlass (\$1,000) was stolen from a residence on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills Nov. 4-6.

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