

Farmington schools won't raise summer taxes

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Farmington area homeowners shouldn't expect to see their summer tax rate cut by the school district again this year. But it isn't going up either.

At its meeting Tuesday, the Farmington school board heard a recommendation that the 1997-98 millage rate remain constant for the upcoming summer tax collection. The current rate is 12.8892 mills, or \$1,063 on a home worth \$165,000 (the Farmington-area average).

The variable in the millage equation is the number of students who will attend Farmington schools in fall 1997. Under Proposal A, the district is

allowed to collect \$2,067 per pupil for the next school year from its homebased millage.

"We really don't know what our student count is until September," said Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business and operations, who made the recommendation to the board.

"Depending on how many students we have and what the taxable value is, we would have to roll back or increase our millage to get that \$2,067. Since we have two tax bills; (one in the summer and (one in the) winter, my recommendation was to leave it as is for the summer."

Over the past three years, the district has rolled back the homebased millage

'We really don't know what our student count is until September.'

Cheryl Cannon
—assistant superintendent for business

by a little over one mill. The other levy of 18 mills on non-homebased is not in question for rollback.

The board of education will discuss the millage levy at a budget public hearing, held at 7 p.m., before the regular board meeting on June 3. Board members will vote to approve the recommendation at that time.

Farmington and Farmington Hills governments have to be notified of the board's decision by the first week in June in time for the summer collection.

"We never want to be in a position of having to roll up (the millage amount)," said Cannon. "Unless it was a big, significant amount of students, I just think it's better practice to wait."

There certainly won't be any influx of students from other Oakland County school districts. Also at the Tuesday meeting, the board of education voted unanimously to opt out of the controversial Schools of Choice program, which would allow students from other districts to enroll in Farmington schools.

According to Superintendent Bob

Maxfield, the negative public response at an open informational meeting on the subject last October heavily influenced the board.

"Basically, everyone who spoke said, for all kinds of reasons, 'We like our class sizes, and there's no reason to open up our schools.' There were concerns about possible overcrowding."

Maxfield isn't surprised at the rejection, the second since Schools of Choice was offered in spring 1996.

"Not at all," he said. "The board was very open to considering it, and said, 'Let's hear what the people have to say.' They heard, loud and clear, that there was no interest."

Sanitary need pushes sewers for Greencastle

BY WILLIAM COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

A narrow majority of residents of the Greencastle subdivision pushed for new sanitary sewers in the area south of 12 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster at Monday's Farmington Hills City Council meeting.

But the city council was impressed enough with the need, especially in light of possible health concerns, to vote 6-0 for the special assessment district. Councilman Jerry Ellis was absent.

Although some residents complained about the cost — \$12,977.10 for the average sized lot — many were more concerned with possible health problems as septic systems fail.

Greencastle resident Tim Hartge said water in his system had "3,000 times" the safe limit of E. coli bacteria.

"E. coli bacteria is a potential killer at worst," he said, adding that the bacteria had caused deaths related to poor meat inspections in Washington state prompting new laws concerning meat inspection standards.

The bacteria is prevalent in human waste.

Councilman Terry Sever, who cautioned against "over-dramatizing" health concerns, said with the vague response from the county health department along with evidence of the potential for health problems, he supported the special assessment district.

"There was a chance for this to

drop below (50 percent support)," Sever said concerning the change in support by one resident. "I would have supported it anyway. I do not believe we should ever allow that type of ground surface contamination in that community."

Only 50.57 percent of residents favored the project. When resident Ilie Pop decided to withdraw his support because of the cost, the project was in danger.

New resident Steven Stimson, though, tipped the favorable sentiment, despite the cost.

"Imagine my shock," he said. "I just moved in and this is an extra cost. But this is more important than the cost."

The project, which the city would put on a three- to four-month fast track, will cost an estimated \$1,129,000 with residents paying the total cost.

In other action, the council:
■ Approved consideration of a special assessment district for Fendt Avenue and Drake Road from Fendt to 300 feet north of Section 33 east of Founders Sports Park.

That paving project would cost the owner of an average parcel an estimated \$6,081.80. Almost 57 percent of the property owners were in favor of the project.

■ Announced the city's Rouge Rescue '97, where the city, local businesses and residents will pitch-in on June 7 to clean up the river at a site in the southeast part of the city.

Tourist stop?



STAFF PHOTO BY SILVERON LEMMON

Pump station statement: Visitors from Birmingham spent the day checking out the sites around Farmington Tuesday during Mayor's Exchange Day. A key stop was the tour of the city's pump station and retention basin where, above, assistant director of public services Paul Smith (at right) explains the system to Birmingham Mayor Mike Wooley, second from right, city commission members and, at left, Patricia McCullough, community development director. Other stops included Farmington City Hall, the Farmington library, the Farmington Historical Museum and a tour of Avalon Productions, a Downtown Development Authority renovation.

Crime prevention group honors Hills Officer Unruh's efforts

BY WILLIAM COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police Officer Bonnie Unruh has been honored by the American Society for Industrial Security's Detroit chapter for her work as a crime prevention specialist.

Unruh, a 1991 VFW Farmington Hills Police Officer of the Year, was honored for her efforts in loss prevention and security by the 26,000 member international organization.

"I had never thought about working in crime prevention," said Unruh, who with her Livonia firefighter husband, Jon, has a daughter Megan, 2. "I've found that you can do more to help prevent crime than you often can while on patrol."

Unruh has overseen the department's Business Watch program, a violence in the workplace seminar, community policing seminar, and has worked in the department's commercial security survey program, neighborhood watch program and others.

A recent program organized by Unruh that emphasizes ways in which rental housing properties can prevent crimes and better screen tenants, received glowing reviews from many who attended.

"She approaches her job in a very professional way," said Unruh's supervisor, Lt. Pat Brown. "Whenever you ask Bonnie to perform a task, you know it is going to be taken care of."

Police Chief Bill Dwyer, who



Once of prevention: Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca, left, and David C. Finn, right, of the American Society for Industrial Security, present Officer Bonnie Unruh with a crime prevention award.

nominated Unruh for the honor, said the role of crime prevention programs has increased because it brings about more public involvement.

"Because of the increase of crime in the 1980s, there has been more emphasis on getting the public involved in law enforcement," Dwyer said. "Programs like Neighborhood Watch, Business Watch and others are helping citizens become involved. Officers like Bonnie Unruh are important in making the public aware of those programs and ways to prevent crime."

Unruh, who said she has always liked being a patrol officer, said she has been pleased with the public's response to crime prevention programs.

"I think that once people are made aware of these programs, like the multi-housing program, they are glad that the department is trying to work with them."

Unruh, who joined the department as a cadet in 1983 and became an officer in 1990, was presented with the award on May 15.

Warrants name antique store owner

Warrants were issued last week against the owner of Hickory Hill, the now-closed Farmington antiques store.

Two felony charges of embezzlement over \$100 and a misdemeanor charge of failing to register as a business were filed last week by the Oakland County Prosecutor.

According to Gary Goss, Farmington director of

public safety, both charges related to denials who had dealt with the Grand River store.

More than 60 complaints have been received by the public safety department since the store closed at the end of March, then reopened with a woman operating it, before closing again this month.

Many complaints involved people whose items were to be sold on consignment.

We went looking for a higher return on our money.

We found it right at our bank.

Get money-market rates with RatePLUSSM Savings. Guaranteed. Michigan National's RatePLUS Savings customers have consistently earned a rate of interest competitive with the best national money market mutual funds. Now, we guarantee it. Here's how it works:

Annual Percentage Yield (APY):	Rate Guarantee
4.95% <small>and up (Balances \$25,000 and over)</small>	<small>To meet or exceed MIC's Money Fund Report Averages — All funds 30-day T-1M</small>
4.75% <small>(Balances below \$25,000)</small>	<small>To be no more than 1/8% below MIC's Money Fund Report Averages — All funds 30-day T-1M</small>

Your rate is based on the average of over 800 leading money market mutual funds. And, unlike other investment options, you have easy daily access to your money. That's the Rate. Here's the PLUS. You also enjoy:

- Low minimum balance options starting at just \$6,000
- Checking free of regular monthly service charges when you maintain the RatePLUS minimum balance
- Easy access to your accounts by phone, at an ATM, by PC or at any of our financial centers
- And, much more

Call today. We'll show you how your returns can go up. Without tying your money down. Only at Michigan National. Solid Thinking. Smart Ideas.

For information call: 1-800-CALL-MNB