

Unopposed incumbents talk about issues

BY BUE BUCK
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Farmington School Board incumbents Jack Inch and Cathy Webb are running without challenge for two, four-year terms in the Monday, June 10 election.

That could be why only a handful of people attended a half-hour candidate forum sponsored and hosted by the Farmington Area PTA Council. The Council includes representatives from all district schools.

The audience consisted of Kim Heath, PTA Council president, who introduced candidates, Sue Zurvalec, the district's assistant superintendent for staff and community services, Laetitia Jones, Wooddale Elementary principal and Farmington School Board Members Priscilla Brouillette and Pam Christian.

Michael Bridges of the PTA Council moderated the meeting, which will be shown on TV 10.

Inch, 71, a professor of eco-

nomics at Oakland Community College, has served on the board since 1978; Webb, 50, a part-time advertising artist, since 1990.

"I first ran for the board saying, 'Cathy Cares About Kids,' and nothing has changed," said Webb, a 23-year Farmington Hills resident. She and husband Jim have two grown sons.

Inch, a 42-year Farmington resident, is married to Sandy and has four grown children.

"I believe in what I have done," Inch said. "I have a straightforwardness and a consciousness that I represent all residents."

Main legislative issues

"School and revenue should be the only issue the legislature should focus on," Webb said. "New policy makers will have to adopt a strategic approach to adjust Proposal A and step up to the plate and fully fund the special education program they have mandated. There's no tax-

payer control over state revenue. Enrollment drives school funding."

Proposal A, adopted in 1994, was supposed to close the funding gap between school districts, she said.

However, in an economic downturn, the district sees a negative impact on its budget. She called school funding a "financial shell game," because the state and federal government don't contribute their fair share toward special education.

Inch also said Proposal A doesn't finance the school district in the way it was intended almost 10 years ago. Consequently the district has to reduce spending elsewhere.

"Special ed has been underfunded throughout the history of the program," Inch said. "A more diverse school population has also necessitated increased spending on language training. 'This is not a free lunch,' he said. 'The state talks

well but there seems to be a lack of understanding. Michigan is the most business-cycle-oriented state in the United States. When there's a turn down that is a mild fever in some states, in Michigan it becomes a convulsion as the funds drop off so quickly. Rainy day funds disappear."

Goals

Webb wants to expand dialogue on education reforms. "A lot of education candidates campaign for more assessment tests and are running away from issues that are critical like professional development, staff time and class size," she said.

She wants every child to have every opportunity and wants them to develop positive, respectful attitudes.

"I'd like to see our reading program become the best in the country," Inch said. "What I've noticed is the inability for students to really read and a reduction in the student's vocabulary through the years. I'd like a reading program which fits every student."

Student diversity makes it difficult to assimilate and learning the English language isn't easy to do, he said. "Translation is not always a quick and easy thing to do for some people."

Another "pet goal" for Inch is a designated science room in every elementary school. Funding makes this difficult, he said. "We don't train enough scientists. Rooms that might have been used for science are now used to accommodate the special education program, Inch said. "I feel like the Man of La Mancha on this. It's the impossible dream."

Areas to improve

Webb targets improvement within the organization. "We have the finest staff in the state and the nation," she said. "We need to help teachers help students learn."

Inch wants a continuation of what was started a number of years ago — a customized program for each student. "We're dealing with what for most people is their most precious commodity, their children," he said. "Taxpayers need some type of

flexibility and some sort of relief, Webb said. The school business office had the foresight to recommend setting aside a healthy fund equity, she said. "We had a cushion to fall back on."

Inch personally favors a return to the property tax. "I really don't like sending money back to Lansing because I'm not so sure we got everything back," he said. Michigan has both rural and non-rural areas and differences in economics, Inch said.

"Incomes in southeastern Michigan are higher than the rest of the state," he said. "There should be some kind of local enhancement."

The forum will be shown at 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 10 p.m. May 31; 7:30 a.m. June 3; 9 a.m. June 6; 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. June 7 and 10 a.m. June 10. Polls are open from 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. June 10. For more election information, call Judy Steinhebel at (248) 489-3341.

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Moffitt appointed to NACO committee

Oakland County Board of Commissioners Vice-Chairman David Moffitt (R-Farmington Hills) has been appointed to the National Association of Counties Organization's Public Land Steering Committee by NAC President Javier Gonzalez.

Moffitt's focus will be on federally owned public lands including tax immunity problems, shared natural resource payments: Payments in Lieu of Taxes and federal land management programs as a member of the Public Land Steering Committee.

He will help create recommendations on legislative policies and goals, which are presented to the NACO membership during the annual conference. If approved, the recommendations will become a part of the American County Platform and will be presented to Congress and the White House on behalf of the national NACO membership of counties.

"Public lands are a national treasure and participating at a national policy formation level in

their preservation is a rare privilege," said Moffitt.

NACO has given county officials from across the country an active role and strong voice in the nation's capital since 1936. Each of NACO's 11 steering committees consists of 60-90 county officials, which form the policy-making arm of the association.

For more information, call Vice Chairman David Moffitt at (248) 644-0880 or NACO President Javier Gonzalez at (506) 998-6353.

Mayhem from page A1

"The parents are obviously disappointed by their son's decision and traumatized by the loss," Dwyer said. "They're still doing an inventory of what was taken." The city has an ordinance against anyone 17 years or older hosting a party where alcohol is provided to under-age guests.


Since that ordinance was enacted in the mid-1980s, house parties where underage drinking takes place have not been as common, Dwyer said.

"We are disappointed that there wasn't more parental responsibility," the chief said. "Parents should be more aware of where

their children are and checking them for alcohol or drugs."

Dwyer said the department is offering a \$3,000 reward that leads to the recovery of the stolen items or the arrest of anyone responsible for looting the home. Call the department at (248) 473-9600.

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