

Hills officials say Granholm budget plan hurts

BY PAUL PACE
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Manager Steve Brock said under the governor's budget proposal, the city may have its state shared revenues cut another \$280,000 for the next fiscal year, starting Oct. 1.

An executive order from Granholm's office cut shared revenues by around \$300,000 in the middle of the current fiscal year budget.

While the city was able to

balance its budget without any changes in services to residents, more cuts will hurt, Brock said.

"That's another \$300,000 I have to find," Brock said of keeping the city's \$45 million general fund budget in the black.

"We all shared the pain in the last cuts, but this is definitely going to hurt."

He said his staff is in the middle of preparing 2003/2004 budgets for the city and at least the governor's budget plan can at least be

accepted into the proposals.

"We do not anticipate lay-offs," he said. "But we will hold off on filling any open positions right away."

The manager said department budgets will be conservative in the next fiscal year to brace for the possibility of a continued poor economy.

Nancy Cosmounduros, cultural arts coordinator for Farmington and Farmington Hills, said while she's disappointed the governor chose deep cuts in the state's arts

funding, the Farmington area arts program shouldn't be drastically affected. She said Farmington and Farmington Hills taxpayers support a voter-approved millage for special services that includes arts programs. Cosmounduros said the arts grants, however, may be affected under proposed cuts. Those grants help support music concerts.

"We like to keep ticket prices low with our touring grants," she said.

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TITANIC

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better, with the understanding with a good night's rest they will be able to perform better in school," said Kathleen Donnelly, executive director, adding the charity targets schools where 75 percent of children qualify for the hot lunch program. "It's a good measure of the poverty level in the school."

GOOD NIGHT

Since 1998, the organization has provided more than 10,000 local children with tools for a good night's rest.

"We have been able to take care of 10,000 children with no in-kind support, no corporate sponsorship," Donnelly said. "Kmart donated 3,500 sleeping bags one year. Wal-Mart donated 2,000 bags last year. We have also partnered with the Salvation Army and the Detroit Police Department."

Sweet Dreamzzz bedtime kits include a toothbrush and toothpaste, a clean nightshirt, a pillow, a sleeping bag and a little stuffed animal. The students receive an R.E.M. activity book and a sleep kit.

The Salvation Army receives 250 bedtime kits in exchange for the use of their trucks to deliver items. The Detroit Police Department received 70 kits.

With the assistance of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, Sweet Dreamzzz Detroit developed the Rest, Education, Motivate (R.E.M.) Program.

The program teaches children the benefits of healthy bedtime and sleep habits. They learn how to brush their teeth and wash their faces, and are taught to avoid caffeine.

"We also send home an information sheet to parents in either Spanish, Arabic or English encouraging the bedtime hints," Donnelly said. "All children need to be educated on bedtime habits. Most kids don't get enough rest."

The group began in response to an article written in 1996 by Mitch Albom of the *Detroit Free Press*. Albom shared the story of a young boy sleeping under his coat in a burned-out crack house, Donnelly said.

TOUGH SITUATION

"Several of my friends and I helped he and his mother out of that situation," Donnelly said. "It brought to light that there are probably many children sleeping under their coats - if they even have a coat. He was trying to do well in school. It was difficult for him because he hadn't slept all night trying to stay warm."

Which was dropping off laundry on Grand River the day Donnelly excitedly approached her about helping the child. "She pulled up and said 'I've got a great idea.'"

"Kathleen is one of these people who is very kind and motivated," Borri said.

Figuring that if there was one child, there were probably many more, the women met with an elementary school principal.

"The first year we did 560 children at Beaud Elenary in southwest Detroit," Donnelly said. Since then, hundreds of volunteers have helped with the year-round effort. For school programs, they wear flannel pajamas, bathrobes and night hats and visit with Mr. Sandman. Children receive a snack of milk and cookies.

North Farmington High's Northern Lights choral group joined them last November. Public and private schools have been supportive by collecting Beanie Babies, socks, crayons and mittens; eighth-graders from St. Fabian in Farmington Hills helped with the last distribution.

Adrian Owens, owner of Papa John's in Farmington, has been one of Sweet Dreamzzz's most staunch supporters.

"Even when no one else was behind us, he has always had a collection box at his pizza place," Donnelly said. "He has fed kids pizza three years in a row. He's provided more than 10,000 slices of pizza."

Owens has also put the volunteers' husbands through "pizza school," so they can deliver pizza to various locations.

The group wants to centralize distribution to create one distribution site, where the kids would be bused for a program. A pilot of this is scheduled in May at the Children's Museum in Detroit, using a bus service.

For tickets to the March 21 fund-raiser, call (248) 477-0242. 12-24-02 pace@honornews.com | (248) 477-5450

GRANHOLM

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\$500 in 2004, and funding to adult education will be reduced from \$77.5 million to \$20 million.

"It took a lot of creativity to keep the foundation grant at a minimum of \$6,700," said Mike Flanagan, former Farmington Schools superintendent and Wayne County Regional Educational Services Agency director from Plymouth Township, who is now an education adviser to the governor. "I really think the economy will get better, enough to grow the school aid fund."

The governor said she values the importance of higher education, but received response from the public that "it might not be as critical as making sure that a child is prepared to go to college, not as critical as making sure that child is not abused or neglected."

With that said, Granholm announced a 6.5 percent decrease in higher education

funding. "No one likes to hear cuts, but this budget is better than expected," said Conway Jeffress, president of Schoolcraft College in Livonia, who attended the session. "I've already earmarked a number of budget cuts, primarily trying to reduce costs in a number of areas, which has allowed me to get almost a million dollars out of the current budget."

Granholm also announced a 3-percent reduction in state revenue sharing funds for Michigan communities.

"We hope local units of government will protect first responders and public safety first, and pause on very valuable and important programs," she said.

Granholm said it's clear the state can't continue to spend more than it makes.

"The days of spending beyond our means are over," she said. "As long as I am your governor, this state will spend within, and live within, its means."

The \$1.7 billion general fund budget deficit has been wiped out, and we've done so without

raising taxes," added Granholm. State Rep. Marc Shulman (R-West Bloomfield), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said there could be arguments as to how large the budget deficit is calculated.

"That (the governor's) deficit is based upon a budget that tries to maintain current service needs," said Shulman. "If you look at the budget at maintaining the current level of spending, the revenue shortfall will be in the area of \$600 million. So, there's a big difference between the deficit that's projected in maintaining certain service level needs, which the administration says is \$1.7 billion."

Granholm said next year's budget reflects a \$200 million cut in administrative cost reductions, plus closing tax loopholes and raising some fees to raise approximately \$200 million in additional revenue. She noted the \$1.1 billion in spending reductions are the largest in Michigan history.

"We have built, I'm proud to say, a government that is lean, but not mean," Granholm told

legislators. Other priorities in her budget, according to Granholm, were the restoration of healthcare to 40,000 caretakers of foster care children; protection of medical benefits for children of seniors and pregnant women; tripling the number of seniors that will have a prescription drug benefit; increased mental health funding by 2 percent; and maintaining a commitment to the state's environment.

State Rep. Aldo Vagnozzi (D-Farmington Hills) said he was pleasantly surprised by Granholm's budget plan; in particular, the commitment to K-12 funding.

He also supports a program to recruit more State Police officers to re-fill positions that will be left open by some 500 officers eligible for retirement.

"I think she crafted a budget the legislature will be able to be supportive of," he said. "The way she crafted the increased revenues, I don't think there will be a major objection."

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OCC's Womencenter presents 'Call to Wholeness'

The Womencenter at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills presents "A Call to Wholeness," its 11th annual conference for women on Saturday, March 22.

The conference meets from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the campus Building J. Admission is \$40 and the public is invited.

Keynote presenter is Oakland University English Professor Maureen Dunphy, a writer and journalism workshop leader. Professor Dunphy will offer an interactive presentation titled "Claiming Your Creativity: Inviting More Eureka into Your Life."

Besides the keynote presentation, the conference includes

two workshop sessions, a continental breakfast, lunch and a prize drawing. Workshops will focus on self-esteem, relationships, healing body images, organization of space, learning to set boundaries, time management, making changes, discovering a healthy balance to life, financial issues and more.

"A Call to Wholeness" is pre-

sented by the Womencenter, a facility that provides educational and supportive resources for area women.

For a registration form and more information, call the Womencenter at (248) 522-3642. The Orchard Ridge Campus is located at 27055 Orchard Lake Road, just south of I-696 in Farmington Hills.

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