

Layers Of Tax Plans Face Voters

An Observer Roundup

Overseerland voters may face a long list of tax proposals when they go to the polls in the coming months.

At least one state constitutional amendment is likely to be proposed, the aim being to reduce school districts' dependence on the property tax for operations.

Wayne County will almost certainly ask for jail funds, a regional parks agency is seeking another quarter-mill, one city will be after parks funds, and several school districts are nervously eyeing millage renewals.

Two districts have set special elections in April. Other proposals could come at the May 16 presidential primary, the June 12 regular school election, the August primary and the November general election.

GOV. WILLIAM MILLIKEN is currently touring the state to gather 300,000 signatures on a petition to place a state constitutional amendment on the November ballot that would cut local property taxes to a maximum of 12 mills and allow the Legislature to add a 2.3 per cent increase to the state income tax.

The Milliken plan would establish state funding that would provide a staff to pupil ratio base of at least 47 staff members per 1,000 students, instead of the current practice of allocating a fixed amount of money per pupil.

Local school property taxes under the Milliken plan would be set at six mills, with voters having the option of allowing an additional six mill levy for educational "enrichment" programs.

Democrats have a rival plan that would involve amending the state constitution to allow a graduated income tax, something voters have rejected in the past.

Milliken and legislative Democrats are currently negotiating over whether to continue petition drives or to agree on a compromise proposal that the Legislature could put on the ballot.

A mill is a tax of \$1 on property assessed at \$1,000. A home assessed at \$14,000 and taxed at only one mill rate would have a property tax bill each year of \$14.

TWO OTHER property tax proposals are currently being formulated for residents in southeastern Michigan.

The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, which operates nine parks in southeastern Michigan, is asking the State Legislature for a bill to permit the HCMA to ask voters for more millage, either in August or November.

HCMA is currently negotiating with Detroit to take over Belle Isle and is presently under the direction of its own board to develop three more metropolitan parks.

The five-county authority has built and operated parks since 1946 on a quarter-mill tax levy. It is seeking the Legislature's authorization to go up to a half-mill. As a charter authority HCMA must get legislative authorization to put its millage proposal on the ballot; it can't order an election itself.

WAYNE COUNTY is under a circuit court order to improve its jail and juvenile home facilities. The question is: Will county voters honor the court order enough to cough up more taxes?

A County Board of Commissioners committee is studying three building proposals — one that would need a half-mill tax rise, one a three-quarters mill rise, and one a full mill.

The board must decide by March 23 in order to get its building proposal on its preferred ballot — the May 16 presidential primary.

Overseerland voters also face several local millage proposals, and a few surprises.

THOUGH FACING a bleak financial picture, Schoolcraft College trustees have indicated they will not attempt to seek a millage increase this spring.

The college had sought a one mill increase in taxes for general purposes and operations in September 1971, but the request was defeated nearly two to one.

Currently, the college levies a tax of 1.77 mills — 1.22 mills for operations, and .55 mills for debt service. The college expects an 8.5 per cent increase in enrollment in the 1972-73 school year.

Trustees will have to consider either limiting enrollment or raising tuition and fees for the coming school year.

CITIZENS ADVISORY Council in Farmington has recommended a 3.5 mills increase in school operating millage for the next three years, but the school board will ask for a 3.5 mills increase for only one year at Farmington's polls April 24.

Registration deadline for the April 24 election is March 24.

The additional 3.5 mills would restore some of the cuts made in school services in 1971 and 1972, but not all.

Last June, the school board asked for 4.5 mills for three years, and it was defeated 2-1. In August, the board asked for the same amount for only one year and was defeated, but by a smaller margin.

LIVONIA'S millage proposal future is a little uncertain. A one-half mill property tax increase will be on the May 16

ballot in the City of Livonia for parks and recreation, but discussion about a school millage increase to cover Livonia School District's current deficit has not resulted in any proposals.

The parks and recreation millage proposal would finance the building of a major park on Seven Mile Rd. and another good sized park near the intersection of Plymouth and Farmington Rds.

The half-mill increase would also develop about 15 proposed neighborhood park sites. There has been speculation that the Livonia school board is waiting to see the results of the parks and recreation proposal before advancing a millage increase proposal themselves.

PLYMOUTH school district residents will vote June 12 on a school property tax renewal, though the exact amount of the request has not been decided.

Of the 27.65 mills local school property tax in Plymouth, five mills will expire in June. Since the

School District voters will have a special election April 12 on an eight-mill renewal for operations.

The election was timed to occur right after the Easter recess.

Students will lose three days of Easter vacation this year to make up for days lost last fall during a teachers' strike.

No millage proposals will face residents of Clarendonville, Garden City, South Redford or Redford Union school districts this year.

Garden City voters in 1968 passed a 10-year renewal that will not be up for voter approval again until 1977.

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Jail Millage Vote Is May 16

A May 16 millage election to finance jail and juvenile facilities in Wayne County has moved a step closer with preliminary approval of three alternative ballot propositions by the County Board of Commissioners.

The county legislators, meeting as the Ways and Means Committee last week, approved three separate proposals which would raise from \$36 million to \$48 million.

If approved at a formal board meeting Thursday, March 16, the three separate proposals will be filed with the county clerk before a March 28 deadline for filing propositions for the May 16 presidential primary ballot.

THIS WOULD GIVE the board of commissioners the option of later deciding which of the three proposals to put before the voters and withdrawing the other two.

The alternatives are 3/4 of a mill for four years, 3/4 of a mill for five years, or one mill for four years. The first would

raise \$36 million, the second \$45 million and the third \$48 million.

"We are under a court order to meet all the state housing and jail codes at the Wayne County Jail," explained Board Chairman Robert E. FitzPatrick. "The practical effect of this order is that a new jail has to be built because complete reconstruction of the present jail isn't feasible. In order to make a good-faith effort to comply with the court order, we have to ask the voters for millage."

Three alternative figures were chosen because the commissioners will not know the precise amount needed until two studies of correctional and juvenile needs are completed in April.

Consultant working on the two studies have estimated that the new jail would cost at least \$24 million and the proposed rehabilitation facility for juvenile delinquents would cost \$12 million or more.

"THE VOTERS WILL have

an opportunity to make a real impact on juvenile delinquency," FitzPatrick said. "Hundreds of juvenile delinquents are roaming the streets because present county and state facilities are full."

Police estimate that juveniles are responsible for half the crimes committed in Detroit.

One mill is equal to \$1 per dollar of state equalized valuation. Property is required by law to be assessed at half its true cash value. This means that one mill amounts to \$1.19 a year on a home worth \$20,000.

Three-quarters of a mill, the equivalent of 75 cents per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, would amount to \$7.50 per year.

The board of commissioners set a target date of Jan. 1, 1973 for the start of construction of a new jail after a three-judge Circuit Court panel ruled that incarceration in the present one, which opened in 1929, constitutes cruel and inhuman punishment.

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