

# LANSSING COMMUNITY NEWS



Serving the Town and Village of Lansing, Cayuga Heights, King Ferry & Genoa  
 "Not quite paradise, but a nice place to live."  
 Wednesday, April 16, 1997 ♦♦♦ Vol. II No. 16

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**LOW ATTENDANCE** - Fewer than 20 district residents attended the Lansing School Board's April 10 "Open Forum" to express wishes or concerns about the '97-98 budget. The Board later adopted a \$14.86 million budget that will increase the tax rate by 3.9 percent to \$18.18 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

Lansing Tax Increase Includes New Building Project:

## Bd. of Ed. Struggles With Staffing Requests; Taxes To Increase 3.9%

By Matthew Shulman

Lansing property owners fearing a 7-8 percent tax increase heaved a collective sigh of relief last Thursday evening when the Lansing School Board passed a \$14,863,253 1997-98 budget that's expected to keep the tax rate increase to under 4 percent.

When the new building project was presented to, and approved by, voters last year, it was generally expected that debt service on the building project alone would increase taxes by about 5 percent. With nearly 80 percent of the district's operating budget being accounted for by personnel costs, predictable faculty and support staff step in-

creases and salary increases were expected to lead to an additional 2-3 percent increase.

However, Lansing found a way to mitigate the expected cost by getting lower than expected interest bond anticipation note (BAN) rates and through an arbitrage strategy called "debt service offset." Because vendor payments for the building project are made as work phases are completed, the Board retained an advisor who helped the District invest temporarily idle funds to generate interest to the district. The net result was a 2.82 percent tax increase for the build

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## Trustees Vote 5% Tax Increase; Discuss Village Comprehensive Plan

Following a public hearing at which no one from the public appeared, Lansing Village Trustees adopted a \$2.64 million 1997-98 operating budget last Monday (Apr. 7) by a 4-0 vote. The village tax rate will rise about 5 percent from \$1.41 to \$1.48 per thousand of assessed valuation. The annual increase on a \$200,000 home will be \$14.

Mayor Donald Hartill said that previously deferred highway maintenance on the 14 miles of village roads was "coming home to roost." Resurfacing of the Cinema Drive and Uptown Road neighborhoods is being designed this year and will be executed in the spring of '98. A sidewalk on Sheraton Drive is also in the works.

A small addition to the village offices to create a second meeting room and an increase in the appropriation for Gadabout and the Northeast Seniors also added to the increased village outlay.

The village budget also contained a \$102,000 contribution to its capital reserve fund. While not part of the village's operating budget, the \$1.88 million balance is in place as a contingency fund to help with major improvements planned for the North Trihammer Road corridor from the Route 13 overpass to Brook Drive if the village's funding request to the NYS Dept. of Transportation is not approved.

### Tax Base Stagnation

A major reason that Lansing's tax rate has increased is the \$15.89 million decrease in the municipality's real estate assessment base since 1995 despite continued construc-

tion and economic activity. Two factors account for the 6.02 percent decline in the assessment base upon which the tax burden is shared.

First, much new construction is partially sheltered from property tax levies for up to 10 years through aid mechanisms administered by the Industrial Development Agency to promote growth in Tompkins County.

Second, Pyramid Mall was successful in a suit that claimed its property had been over-assessed for a number of years. According to Real Property Appraiser Valeria Coggin, a 1995 court-settlement was negotiated that is permitting Pyramid to recover tax overcharges without forcing county, town, village and school municipalities to refund cash. Under terms of the settlement, Pyramid's assessment dropped from \$57 million in 1995 to \$42.1 million in 1996. As the overcharges are recovered, the assessment is expected to rise over a number of years to approximately \$50 million.

### Village Comprehensive Plan

Tompkins County planner Rebecca Lubin asked Village Trustees for feedback on a draft of goals and recommendations that will eventually be incorporated in a Comprehensive Plan to shape the village's policy goals over the next 10-20 years.

It's expected that all chapters will be completed by June so the Planning Board and trustees can review completed documents before calling for public meetings. The Board's intent is to finish the Comprehensive Plan by the end of this summer.

## Love & Technology Help Kids Transcend Physical Limits

By Aline Shulman

Some of the things that most children take for granted are not so obvious for kids with severe physical or intellectual limitations.

Last Monday, Jeffrey Garbo of the Northeast School and 15 other Northeast and BOCES students went to class at the RINK. For the first time in his life, Jeffrey was able to experience the speed of gliding on ice, the sound of runners and the cool breeze that struck his face as physical therapist Jeanne Lowe pushed a specially designed ice sledge up and down the rink.

It wasn't an extracurricular activity for Mrs. Dapne Lanzillotto's class, but an integral part of the special education program.

Special education, as the name implies, designs intensely individualized programs to help children make the most progress possible in the face of challenges that at other times and in other places might have relegated them to isolated lives. Whether or not an individual child can completely overcome his or her challenging condition, special education helps each achieve a "personal best."

Last week's outing to the RINK, however, was not only a first for Jeffrey and his mates, but also marked first time that the adaptive technology of ice sledges and sledge hockey had ever been seen in Tompkins County.

Most of the children used walker-type supports to make their way around the rink. The cold and falls were difficult for a few of the students but most got so involved in this new activity that they were upset when their teachers and aides said it was time to get off



"YES, I CAN" - Physical therapist Jeanne Lowe helps Jeffrey Garbo, 9, with his first experience of speedily gliding on ice and feeling the cool air on his face at an outing of Northeast School special education students at the RINK last Monday.

the ice. Some, like Jeffrey, lacked the motor control to use these traditional mobility aids and would have missed the experience - had it not been for the ice sledges.

Ice sledges are specially designed sleds equipped with hockey skate blades mounted underneath the seat. Depending on the person's disability, straps around the ankles, knees and waist securely hold the player on the sledge.

Sledge hockey was developed in Norway in the 1960s and quickly "migrated" to

Canada where disabled adults and children could engage in ice hockey for the first time. Players use short sticks equipped with ice picks on one end and a short hockey stick blade on the other. They use the ice picks to propel their sledges across the ice and use the hockey stick blade to swat the puck. It's a sport that totally integrates players with mobility limitations.

Jeffrey's limitations didn't permit him to use the ice hockey potential of the sledge, but shared in the excitement of his new sur-

roundings as his physical therapist piloted him around the ice for nearly an hour.

The sledges at the RINK were borrowed from the *Niagara Challengers*, a sledge hockey team in Buffalo, and were brought to Lansing by Pam Maryjanowski, game coordinator for the Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged.

"I'm really pleased to be working with a group in Lansing," said Maryjanowski. "You have a great facility so I hope that physically challenged people of all ages can take advantage of it."

Local coordinator Lynne Logan, a physical therapist from the Special Children's Center, agrees and wants to create new opportunities for the children she serves. Sledge hockey, sailing and climbing are among the activities in the works to broaden the world of handicapped youth.

The sledges cost several hundred dollars each. The ones used Monday were manufactured by inmates at a state prison in Albion (Orleans County). A local business and a Lansing association have already expressed interest in acquiring several sledges so differently abled, as well as able-bodied, youth and adults can enjoy the pleasure of sports.

"Community help is welcomed," said Logan. "Anyone who'd like to get involved can contact me at 277-8020."

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**PANCAKE ALERT!!**  
 ..  
 The final North Lansing Fire Auxiliary pancake breakfast of the '96-97 season will be this Sunday from 8-11:00 am at the North Lansing Firehall.  
 Bring your appetites!  
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