

Farmington Observer

Volume 88 Number 47 Thursday, June 9, 1977 Farmington, Michigan 64 Pages Twenty-Five Cents

Nature center at stake

Gill parents battle vandals

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Gill Elementary School parents and teachers are declaring war on vandals who have been tearing up the nature center that has been an area project for five years.

Gill PTA members are looking for solutions to the problems of destroyed benches and hacked trees in the nature area used by students from Power Junior High and Gill. The 10 acres of wooded area borders the two schools and residents' backyards.

Although neighbors call police when they hear a power saw revving up in the center, Gill Principal Frank Kasun has heard complaints that the Farmington Hills officers arrive too late to catch the intruders.

Another problem in catching the culprits is presented by the area itself,

according to Dennis Martin, head of the PTA committee.

"When you hear a power saw, it sounds a lot like a two cylinder motorcycle, and there are a lot of those around here," Martin said.

Pictures of one set of intruders were taken by a group of Boy Scouts working in the center, but the photos are too blurry to be used for identification, according to Kasun.

WHATEVER THE PROBLEM police and citizens have in catching the vandals, they are certain that the nature center has been damaged by groups of intruders.

"It's upsetting to me to see the damage," said Kasun, who has been Gill's principal for 12 years.

Damages include the uprooting of

wooden benches with iron legs sunk into concrete and set into the ground. There were 14 benches in various parts of the park. A weekend after they were installed, vandals had strewn them around the area, according to Kasun.

Numbered posts, which were coordinated with a recorded narrative about the plants and animals in the center, have disappeared.

Trails, originally lined with logs, are littered with beer cans after a weekend of parties, according to Kasun. Logs edging the paths are missing.

Quail, woodpeckers, foxes, chipmunks and ducks have lured another kind of vandal. Last year, Farmington Hills police found steel animal traps in the center.

"A child could have lost a finger or a hand if he decided to poke around one of those traps," Kasun said.

SNOWMOBILERS AND MOTORCYCLISTS are attracted to the center, according to Martin. Tire tracks can be traced from the side of the center bordering on a vacant field which is out of sight of the neighborhood.

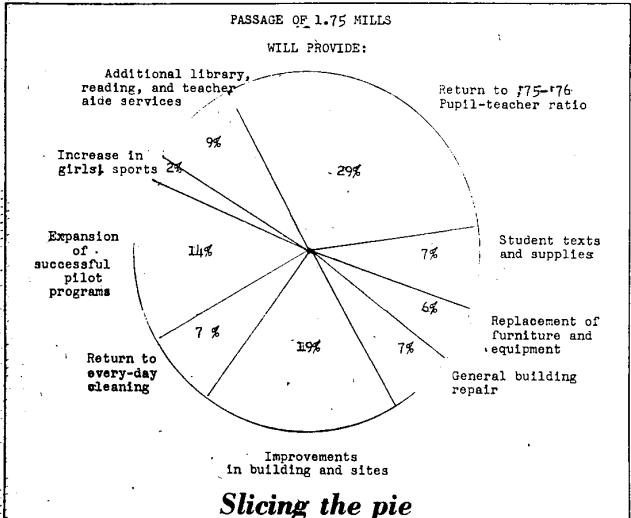
MotORIZED vandals have left their trails in other ways. A gateway, made from a 100-year-old tree, was torn down shortly after completion. The simple gateway was destroyed when vandals hitched a chain to the cross section of the structure and used a vehicle to drag it down. One post remains standing. Its base is set in concrete four feet into the ground, according to Kasun. The gateway was donated by the Robert J. Barber family of Farmington Hills.

"You just can't put anything outside anymore without someone destroying it," said Mrs. Joan Barber. Martin's committee is hoping to avoid being forced to erect a fence around the center.

"I would hate to see a fence around it," said Kasun. Instead, parents are considering placing signs around the center which would warn trespassers that hunting, trapping, littering and vandalism will be punished. Gill's committee will meet at 8 p.m., June 14.



Gill Principal Frank Kasun examines an overturned bench in the Gill-Power Nature Center, behind his elementary school. Vandals have overturned and destroyed the benches and other conveniences volunteers have installed in the center. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Slicing the pie

This graph demonstrates the approximate allocation of funds generated by passage of the 1.75-mill allocated to a five-year plan for improvements in buildings and sites.

Board offers voter choice in option millage question

By LYNN ORR

Farmington school district voters Monday will choose:
A five-year building and sites improvement plan; or
An overall improvement plan including a return to the 1975-76 student-teacher ratio; or
Maintenance of the current education program.
The option millage question asks voters to approve a 2.5-mill increase

for five years or a 1.75-mill increase for two years, if the 2.5-mill increase should fail.

"It's extremely important for voters to know that the 1.75-mill increase will take effect, if it passes, only if the 2.5-falls to receive a majority vote," said school board President Anne Struble.

"Voters have three choices: No millage; a certain amount of improvement in the program, or additional improvement," said Mrs. Struble. The

maximum increase to be levied will be 2.5 mills (\$2.50 per \$1,000 state equalized valuation) if both questions receive a majority vote, she said.

"This is the board of education's plan to give the community a distinct choice in terms of the programs offered," said Supt. Lewis Schulman. "No one is threatening the community with punishment, but we are asking them to help us play catch-up."

"PASSAGE of the 2.5 mills will express a vote of confidence for long range planning," said Mary Ann Reilly, co-chairwoman of the option millage committee. The committee has been meeting with residents to answer questions about the millage election.

"We've seen more than 800 people face-to-face in 93 coffees," added Fairview Elementary School principal Don Cowan, who is optimistic that voters will approve the 2.5 mills.

Farmington School District residents are levied at 34.13 mills for operating expenses and 4.37 mills for debt levy (payment of bonds issued for such expenses as building). Taxpayers pay \$1 per mill on each \$1,000 of assessed value on Farmington School District property.

The 1.75 mill increase would generate \$396,000 since \$336,000 for each mill levied is projected in next year's budget. The additional 0.75 mill of the 2.5 mill option would add about \$401,000.

Passage of the 1.75-mill increase would be allocated in the following way, according to school officials: \$245,000 for six additional elementary and 10 additional secondary classroom teachers to lower the student-teacher ratio to the 1975-76 ratio, a 25:1 average.

(Continued on page 6A)

Woman fights red tape to avoid I-275 noise

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

"I feel almost like a prisoner. I feel like I'm confined to my own home to escape the constant roaring of trucks."

Joan Barber of Farmington Hills was among more than 60 persons Monday who complained of traffic noise from the I-275 freeway in western Wayne and Oakland counties. Their audience was the roads and bridges committee of the State House of Representatives. The hearing at Schoolcraft College was for many, their first chance to level complaints about noise pollution.

But for Mrs. Barber, it was just another skirmish in her larger war to get the Department of State Highways and Transportation to build sound barriers along the freeway.

THE TWO-STORY farmhouse at 3940 Nine Mile, which Mrs. Barber and her dentist husband Robert occupy is a bit more than 100 feet from I-275 on the western edge of Farmington Hills.

"I'm awakened at 6:15 a.m. and can't go back to sleep. The trucks, they just roar. I lay there and get madder and madder," she said.

"You can hear them coming a half-mile away. And they keep getting louder and louder until it builds to a crescendo."

Mrs. Barber wonders why sound barriers were not considered from the beginning. She said she was told when the freeway was first being planned the noise wouldn't be so bad. "They said an elevated expressway would lessen traffic noise. It doesn't, it augments it," she said.

Mrs. Barber said the traffic is not continuous, but that there are a several peak periods when traffic, especially trucks, hits a peak. "And from two or three o'clock, there's just a constant rush."

THE HOUSE dates from 1834 and is "solidly built," but Mrs. Barber said her family can feel it tremble when the tandem-trailer rigs seem to take over the highway.

"My husband said it doesn't bother



Joan Barber gazes at one of the many trucks contributing to noise pollution along I-275 next to her home. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

him. But it bothers me. When we first found out that they were going to build an expressway next to us, he said, 'We'll move.' But you know you can't move from the house where he grew up, a house that is steeped in history."

While the house or the surrounding area does not seem to be physically damaged by the scores of cars and trucks which roll down the newly laid concrete ribbon, Mrs. Barber said it is no longer a pleasant place to live.

"It used to be such a quiet place. Now, we have to yell at each other in the backyard to talk."

"I can't imagine why anyone would want to live around here anymore," she said. "They'd go crazy listening to all that noise."

MRS. BARBER said she has carried her campaign for immediate relief from the noise pollution for herself and others who live on the interstate's borders to Lansing and Washington. She ticked off a litany of Michigan politicians and bureaucrats whom she had contacted. She said she called Warren Cox, senior district engineer for the department of highways and transportation; Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington); U.S. Rep. William Brodhead (D-Detroit); and U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle (D-Mich.) as well as the four state highway commissioners. Some have listened, some have not.

In any case, she learned Monday that the department of highways and transportation has slated two sections of I-275 south of Six Mile for sound barrier construction. She also learned that the department had no plans for noise barrier construction north of Six Mile.

inside

POWER MOWER SOLD QUICKLY

Robert Forde's sold his power mower in just one day through the Observer & Eccentric classified section. More proof that our want ads are a quick and efficient way to find a buyer for your lawn equipment.

SEARS 20" cut rotary lawn mower, 3 1/4 h.p. with catch. Excellent condition, \$50.

DIAL DIRECT
644-1070

- Community Calendar
- Club Circuit
- Editorial Opinion
- News
- Sports
- Suburban Life
- Classifieds

- 3B
- 2B
- 18A
- Section A
- Section C
- Section B
- Section C, D

2 Harrison students held in school rift

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Two Harrison High students face charges stemming from a shooting incident at the school Tuesday afternoon.

A 17-year-old student was arraigned Wednesday morning in 47th District Court on charges stemming from the incident, which began with an argument between a group of youngsters Tuesday morning. Police are asking that he be tried as an adult.

The 16-year-old companion is in Oakland County Juvenile Home awaiting a hearing. He will have a hearing in 47th District Court.

The Harrison Hills patrol cars were dispatched to the school at noon. Police arrived in the incident. A group of police officers, a fight between a group of youngsters began in the school's gymnasium. The students and their friends, who were present, and the group was made return in the afternoon.

When the two returned at noon, a fight broke out on a stairway within the school.

THE 16-YEAR-OLD was held back by a student until his 17-year-old companion pulled out a .22 caliber pistol and ordered that his friend be let loose. After the ultimatum, a struggle followed and the gun was knocked out of the older boy's hand. The younger student picked it up and the two ran outside of the school, according to Farmington Hills police.

Both young men fled to the foot-bridge in the back of the school. They were pursued by a group of students. At the bridge the gun was fired and the students told to "cease following the two. Police apprehended the two as they walked down the staircase near Middle East at 4:30 p.m. Police found a .22 caliber revolver and a tire iron on the juveniles.

Farmington Hills Police estimate that four shots were fired during the incident.