

Hills makes a \$1 million offer for golf course

Farmington Hills residents may have their own backyard golf course, if the price is right.

San Marino Golf Course, a private nine-hole course, and its accompanying 75 acres of property and equipment could become city property if the owners like the city's \$1.1 million offer.

Hills city council members voted unanimously Monday night to authorize city officials to make a bid for the total package.

San Marino had been designated as a possible parks and recreation site in the city's master plan adopted this year by the council.

Although the property value is estimated at about \$16,000 an acre, the city's offer amounts to about \$15,000 an acre, according to City Clerk Floyd Cairns.

A storage shed and office facilities valued at about \$100,000 are included in the purchase price. Equipment,

with the exception of golf carts the San Marino owners lease, would be included in the package deal, Cairns added.

Parks and recreation commission members endorsed the purchase of the course in October, if financial arrangements could be made. In addition to golf, the course is currently used by the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department for winter activities, such as cross-country skiing.

IF THE purchase offer is accepted,

the city will probably finance the project through the sale of general obligation lease bonds by the city building authority and a \$2,500 appropriation from the general fund surplus.

Based on a review of the past five years' green fees, the city could expect to gross \$140,000 annually from the course, according to City Mgr. George Majoros.

As a city-owned property, taxable property loss would amount to \$1,500 annually, he added.

Current operating expenses are minimally \$40,000 annually, while Majoros anticipates some capital equipment and improvement expenditures.

"After 1988, however, the site would be expected to generate a net surplus to the city," he said, noting that the eleven year bonds would be redeemed at that time.

"Other revenues can be developed in addition to green fees in order to defray some of the initial subsidy required to retire debt," he added.

Majoros is recommending the eleven year financing period for several reasons he detailed in a memo. Financial institutions prefer bonds exempt from early maturity which may result in lower interest costs; later-maturing bond issues incur higher interest costs, since investors seek a greater hedge against long-term inflation and market risk; and the shorter-maturing bond issue could contribute to a future lower bond rating for the city, Majoros said.

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Developer files first bid for mid-rise zoning

Construction on a mid-rise senior citizen complex could begin within a year, if the Farmington Hills Zoning Board of Appeals approves a rezoning request at tonight's meeting.

The board will hear their first request for RCE-1 zoning, a controversial zoning amendment which allows senior citizen housing of up to 60 feet, passed by the Hills City Council less than two months ago.

Mid-rise and high rise buildings have been exempt from the Farmington Hills landscape under former zoning ordinances.

"We know the need is there for elderly housing," Cline said, adding that he expects about 40 per cent of the tenants would be family members of Farmington Hills residents.

"If a facility is available in the city, the residents will be the first to want their mothers and fathers in it."

If the property is rezoned to allow the mid-rise housing, Multi-Rise will

begin processing through the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program, Cline explained.

"Even though it won't be subsidized, that's the only place you can get 7 1/2 per cent money."

The company would expect to break ground within six to nine months after rezoning is granted, he added.

...as opponents march into court

The rezoning request by Multi-Rise Associates of Southfield concerns about 10 acres of property currently zoned commercial located on the west side of Orchard Lake Rd., south of Fourteen Mile.

If the board grants the request, a public hearing will be scheduled, along with a city council public hearing and council agenda slot. The final decision will probably come before the council in February if the timetable proves accurate, according to City Mgr. George Majoros.

THE COMPLEX would house senior citizens 62 years of age and older, according to Bud Cline, Multi-Rise representative.

This latest reaction against the zoning comes two months after the Farmington Hills City Council passed the RCE and RCE-1 zoning. Under RCE-1, mid-rise senior citizen housing nearing 60 feet high can be built. A special senior citizen's housing zoning was created with the passage of the sister amendment, RCE.

Although the zoning amendments are passed, they may languish on the books for a while if association attorney Harold Wolkind goes through with his plan to ask Oakland County Circuit Judge Robert Webster for an injunction forbidding use of the zoning amendments.

Wolkind plans to pursue the injunction after city attorneys have answered a complaint filed by the group last week in circuit court.



The poles have it in cross country skiing as these fans demonstrated recently. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

Cross country skiing is far from going downhill

If you like to ski, but don't have the time or money to visit a ski resort, skiing is available in Farmington.

There are no slopes to worry about—just level ground for cross country skiing at the San Marino Golf Course, Halstead Rd., between 11 and 12 Mile Roads.

Forget about towing fees in the cross country and speed isn't of the essence. In cross country skiing, special skis, boots and poles are needed to allow the skier to glide across relatively level ground.

The skis used in cross country are narrower and the poles longer than those used in downhill. There are no back bindings on the skis.

Lessons in cross country skiing are available at the golf course throughout the season via the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation department. Charge is \$3 for a one hour lesson. Class times are Wednesday at 1 p.m.

on request; Saturday and Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. for the beginners and 2:30 p.m. for the intermediate classes.

Parks and Recreation has set Dec. 17 as the tentative opening for the ski course, weather permitting. The course will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Dec. 19 through Dec. 24. It will be closed on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, but will be open Dec. 26 through Dec. 31.

Residents should call 476-5910 to check skiing conditions.

The ski rental rates are \$5 for three hours for adults and \$4 for children (12 and under). The rental includes skis, boots, poles and a facility use fee. There is a \$2 facility fee for those with their own equipment.

Group rates and times are available for parties of 10 people or more through the Parks and Recreation office, 474-6115. Equipment and lesson reservations must be made one week in advance.

Task force awaits feedback Middle schools eyed

THE 67-PARAGRAPH complaint charges the city with unreasonable use of its powers, denying the community due process of law and failing to offer equal protection in housing for all residents, according to Wolkind.

Charges of denying the community due process of law center around a challenge to the city's charter.

Farmington Hills city charter allows petitioners 21 days for collecting signatures after their declaration of intent to bring an ordinance to a referendum vote.

The total amount of signatures should equal 1 1/2 per cent of the number of persons who voted in the last secretary of state election, according to Wolkind.

WITHIN AN ADDITIONAL 24 days, the petitioners must secure the signatures of 1 1/2 per cent of the electorate.

Wolkind's suit contests the 45 day limit to secure those signatures denies the community due process because it is difficult to gather the required signatures within the specified time in a city that lacks a central point, such as a downtown area.

"It's hard to rally persons," he said. In addition, the suit contends the community is being denied equal protection with the new zoning amendments.

The amendments should offer the same housing opportunity for all citizens, according to Wolkind. The amendments give a preferential treatment to seniors, he said.

By passing the zoning amendments, the city council has acted beyond the scope of its authority, according to the suit.

Although city councils are allowed to amend the zoning ordinances, Wolkind interprets the state law as intending to lessen traffic congestion on public streets. The senior citizen zoning will increase traffic on streets near elderly housing, he predicted.

"It doesn't promote the health, welfare or safety of the city," he said.

COUNCIL MEMBERS misused their police powers when they passed the two zoning amendments, he continued. "They didn't make a thorough

(Continued on page 2A)



Dog Magic?

The arches aren't golden, but they might as well be. The concept of the Dog Magic Power and Free conveyor system first introduced in 1939, is one of the company's major contributions to the material handling industry. For more about this international company located in Farmington Hills, turn to page 3A. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

Task force awaits feedback Middle schools eyed

The chances look good that the Farmington School District will undertake a major reorganization within the next few years, if the Task Force on School Organizational Structure (SOS) sticks with its preliminary recommendations.

The outcome of nearly one year of deliberations indicates the task force will recommend moving ninth graders up to senior high level and updating the district's four junior highs into sixth, seventh and eighth grade middle schools.

Before the task force makes its final recommendations to the school board in March, it's awaiting the results of parents' staff and students questionnaires, as well as public feedback in the form of a public hearing on the subject scheduled for mid-January.

While at least two members of the task force are hesitant about the middle school concept, incorporating sixth graders in the current junior high buildings, the members agreed with consulting chairman Fred Ignavitch that economics determined the necessity of moving ninth graders to the senior highs.

"That would not go along with what the elementary teachers are telling us," he said, adding that smaller classes would decrease class offerings and flexibility.

Lanigan is opposed to the idea because the yearly changeover in a two-grade school would be difficult for students and staff.

Ignavitch pointed out that economics practically eliminates the idea.

"The sixth through eighth concept would keep the schools at about 70 per cent utilization," he said, adding that retention of the seventh and eighth graders would see the junior high buildings at under 50 per cent use, possibly forcing the closing of another junior high.

Doug Cooper, Farmington Education Association representative, who suggested a pilot program of moving a few sixth graders to the junior highs wasn't convinced that the rearranging of staff, necessary curriculum and text changes, as well as in-service programs for teachers needed for a middle school concept, wouldn't be cheaper than closing a school.

"If the change is done right, it might cost more," he said.

While the task force awaits questionnaire results and feedback from the public hearing, members also will be preparing recommendations regarding

possible curriculum changes and building alterations in the next few months.

The final decisions will be made by the six voting members of the task force. Consulting chairman Ignavitch and district chairman Earl Baumank, director of vocational and career education, have no vote on the final recommendation.

DECLINING ENROLLMENT was the impetus behind the task force's appointment last January, when enrollment projections developed by the Task Force on Declining Enrollment indicated a sharp drop of students especially in the upper grades, in the 1979-80 school year.

It's expected that the senior highs will lose 600 students, the junior highs 538 students, and the elementary schools 900 students in fall 1979.

"The total reduction of 2,040 students has serious implications for our school district in the determination and usage of school facilities," said Supt. Lewis Schulman while recommending the task force's appointment.

While the school board already has closed one junior high and one elementary school, and will probably close another elementary school next June, the long-term implications and possible answers to enrollment drop, were designated to the SOS Task Force.

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