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Sex bias allegation denied in police case

By LYNN ORR

Sex discrimination? Not in Farmington Hills City Hall, says City Mgr. George Majors.

At least Majors is convinced Farmington Hills Community Service Officer (CSO) Bonnie Swadling lacks a basis for her sex discrimination charge filed with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

Ms. Swadling alleges that because she is a woman she was denied the chance to become a police officer.

Majors interviewed Ms. Swadling for her job as a CSO 2½ years ago.

"I never heard her say she wanted to be a policeman," Majors says. The confusion developed, he maintains, because three former cadets training to become police officers were designated CSOs when the cadet program was dropped.

"That program was under a Law Enforcement Assistant Grant (LEAA), and there were three cadets left that had not become police officers when the LEAA grant ran out."

The non-cadet CSOs were given a patrolman-type examination, but not, however, the same examination given to the former cadets or other police officer applicants, he explains.

Ms. Swadling, who was not a cadet, charges that she was under the impression she was taking a patrolman's exam and had no way of knowing otherwise. She charges that the department failed to promote her to an appointment at the academy after the three male CSOs received appointments.

Majors contends that the difference between the former cadets and hired CSOs was always maintained.

"Some lieutenant may have called them all CSOs," he says.

The CSOs were told that if they did well in that capacity, they might have a "leg up the ladder" when they took the police officers' exam, Majors says.

"But there was no career ladder for

'I never heard her say she wanted to be a policeman.'

—George Majors

CSOs like the former cadet program," he says.

POLICE CHIEF John Nichols wonders why Ms. Swadling failed to apply to the department for the most recent job openings.

Ms. Swadling believes she, like the male CSOs appointed to the academy, shouldn't have to re-apply to the department.

"We were all in the same program," she maintains.

Nichols was yet to be appointed police chief when Ms. Swadling filed her initial charge in May 1977, with the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) commission as a CETA employee.

The CETA response was a letter stating that she had failed to file the necessary grievance procedures with the city, Ms. Swadling says. But because CETA employees were not allowed to become union members at the time, Ms. Swadling says she doesn't know where she could have filed a grievance with the city.

CETA officials contacted in Pontiac refused to release any information concerning disposition of the case to the Observer.

In July 1977, she filed her case with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. To her knowledge, investigations started at the end of December. The city's attorney Charles Keller says he has not received any notice of a hearing in the case.

While Ms. Swadling awaits some official word, Chief Nichols maintains women applicants for police officer jobs have an equal opportunity with men.

Seventy-four of the city's 766 applicants for six new police officer positions are women, he says.

If six women score in the top 10 per cent on the written exam, the cutoff mark, they'll have a crack at the oral, physical, and psychological tests, he says.

Ms. Swadling's score on her written exam taken 2½ years ago was never released to her, she says.

Business bops Hills red tape

By LYNN ORR

Farmington Hills is in trouble with area businessmen.

City officials got that message in triplicate Monday night, from Farmington Chamber of Commerce representatives. Complaints ranged from dissatisfaction with the attitude of city employees to problems encountered in getting building permits.

In addition, political foes Ben Marks, building authority member, and Councilman Joe Alkateeb, wanted to blast the city's engineering department.

"This city has an attitude that you're wrong, unless you can prove to us that you're right," said Don Harms, spokesman for the five chamber members present.

Harms also expressed concern that the residential percentage of the city's tax base is increasing. "We recognize that sooner or later the residential owners just aren't going to be able to bear more than 70 per cent of the tax burden," he said, adding that a healthy climate for business growth was needed to balance the tax load.

Chamber Executive Director Ed Lane said he opposes the city's building height restrictions.

"I don't see how we can invite in big corporations with the height restrictions we have. How many Jervis Webbs are we going to have coming here with the high cost of land?"

Jervis B. Webb Company, an international material handling manufacturing firm, constructed its world headquarters on Twelve Mile west of Farmington Rd. 1½ years ago.

The council meeting was called to gauge chamber reaction to the city's

new business licensing ordinance. But discussion turned to problems encountered by developers and businessmen attempting to comply with city ordinances and codes.

Chamber complaints centered on "unreasonable" restrictions, overzealousness on the part of inspectors, long waits for inspection approvals, and lack of cooperation from city officials.

Marks and Alkateeb aimed their charges at the engineering department.

"I'm talking about attitude," said Alkateeb, an engineer himself. "Maybe we have some people in some responsible places that don't recognize that there's more to life than engineering."

Marks zeroed in on an individual target. "I don't think it's a personnel problem," said the Farmington Hills developer, who lost a bid for a council seat in the November election. "I think it's the person who's running the engineering department. I think he's inept."

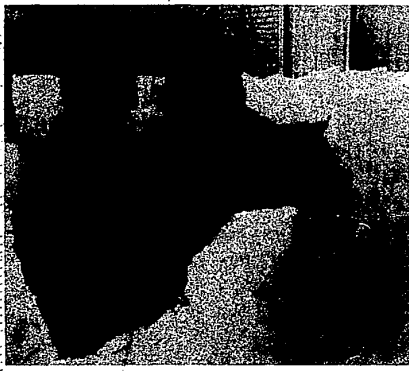
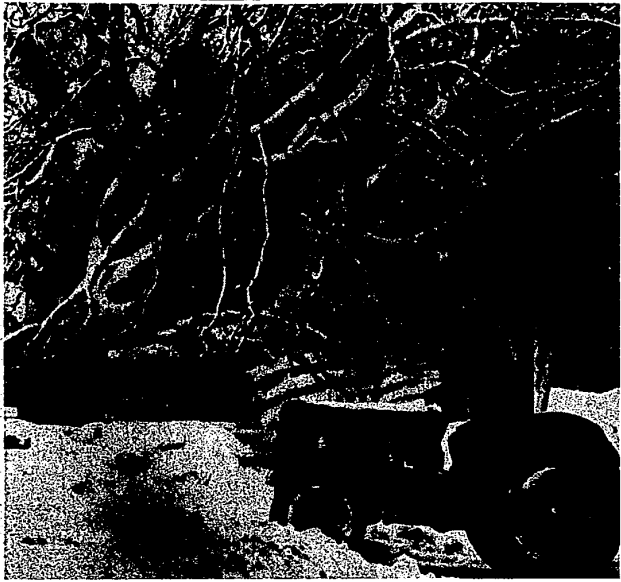
Councilman Keith Deacon rose to the defense of engineering supervisor Tom Biassel, as well as the city's ordinances.

"I don't think we have a right to criticize Tom Biassel if he's adhering to what our policies say," Deacon said adding that he didn't think chamber members were aware of the basis for established ordinances and codes.

"Is that how you want the city developed—hit and miss?" he asked the audience.

CITY MGR. George Majors also defended his staff.

(Continued on page 8A)



Winter blessings

Believe it or not, winter has its good side. Take it from Neil Kitts (above), who manned his tractor to plow snow and was treated to this beautiful winter scene. Students like Adam Zebari, (left) and friend Pat Rogers took advantage of days off from school to build an igloo. (Staff photos by Harry Mauths)

Plowing snow costs lots of bucks

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

After clearing the mounds of snow, city officials face the task of digging out of the financial mess caused by last week's record-breaking storm.

While Farmington Hills is attempting to recoup some of its storm expenses through federal disaster relief funds, Farmington Police Chief Dan Byrnes is considering some budget cutbacks to see his department through the fiscal year.

City officials are still totaling up the expense of the blizzard which hit the area last weekend.

"Everybody is working with a shot budget," said Farmington Hills Finance Director Girard Miller.

Salt and overtime costs helped the Farmington Hills Department of Public Works push its budget toward the breaking point.

While Supt. Bob Shaw hopes federal

money will relieve some of the strain, he's working with a budget that has already been chipped away by cleanup campaigns from three snow storms in one month.

SHAW'S department started the winter with \$20,000 allotted for keeping major roads clear. By the end of December, \$25,000 remained for the major road cleanup.

Local roads were budgeted for \$108,000. At the end of December, there was \$37,000 in the DPW's account for maintenance of local roads, according to Miller.

"Clearly January is going to chew up one-third of their remaining budget," Miller said.

"December was a bad month and January isn't going to be better."

Although the DPW will probably turn out to be \$20,000-\$30,000 over budget, Miller believes it could have been worse.

"It's not the end of the world. There are other things that you can cut back on in the spring," he said.

For one, the DPW is applying for federal relief made possible when Michigan was declared a disaster area.

Federal money could pay for 75 per cent of the cost of keeping Farmington Hills clear of snow from Thursday through Sunday. The city had 15 machines on the street for 77 hours. Cleanup crews worked two eight-person shifts lasting 14-16 hours, according to Shaw.

ALONG with paying crews overtime, Shaw is coping with a salt shortage. Although he ordered 2,300 tons before the storm, it has yet to reach him.

During the storm, DPW crews cut the salt supply to 125 tons. If that runs out, crews can use sand chloride,

although Shaw says this is only a backup measure. The sand slides into the city's drains and clogs them, he said.

Meanwhile, the storm has almost dictated that Shaw wait longer for his ordered salt.

"I can't argue with them if they tell me that Monroe or Washtenaw county needs the salt more," he said.

Shaw filled out the federal forms in conjunction with the Farmington Hills Police Department on Tuesday afternoon.

"We'd been in there since 5 a.m. Thursday. That means the 36 hours before Michigan was declared a federal disaster are on us," he said.

FARMINGTON Hills Police Capt. Russell Conway was in the process of estimating the amount of overtime his men worked during the weekend. On Tuesday afternoon, the total had yet to be tallied, he said.

The amount of overtime hours included the pay for about a fourth of his 18-man auxiliary crew who worked through the weekend.

Another applicant for federal funding is the Farmington Hills Fire Department, which has had continual monthly increases in the number of calls it receives. The calls force more overtime by firefighters, straining salary allocations for the department.

Overtime caused by the blizzard strains an already tight situation.

"The police department salary and wage budget has been in good shape," Miller said. "The fire department's budget is a little touchier."

At the end of December, the fire department had 56 per cent of its salary allotment left, giving it a six per cent cushion for the remaining half of the fiscal year, according to Miller.

The year began with the fire department budget at \$226,000. Of that amount, \$27,000 was earmarked for salaries. At the end of December, the department had spent \$144,000 of its budget.

FIRE Chief John Van De Voort credits the city's population with the growing demand on his department. Fire calls have increased by 28 per cent (Continued on page 8A)

Public opinion is sought on city improvement grant

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Farmington Hills residents will have a chance next Monday to aid in deciding how to spend \$438,000.

The city council will conduct a public hearing that night at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be at city hall, corner of Orchard Lake Road and Eleven Mile.

At stake are funds from the Federal Community Development Block Grant program administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The city has participated in the program for the past three years, and has received \$1 million.

Primary purpose of the program is to eliminate housing blight and deterioration, according to Mike Dornan, assistant to the city manager. Dornan coordinates federal programs.

"We're looking for ideas to improve

the community," says Dornan, who says the Hills' program is one of the most successful in Oakland County.

IN PREVIOUS YEARS, the city has used the funds to pay for the installation of storm sewer drains in the city's south end. But, the majority of the funds has gone for loans and grants to homeowners who wish to fix up their houses.

The program is directed at the south end, says Dornan, because that is where homeowners need the most financial help.

"We've got to be able to justify to the feds that we will actually be using the funds to help the community. So far we've been successful."

The south end is bounded by Nine Mile on the north, Eight Mile on the south, Inster on the east and Drake on the west.

Basically, the program is outlined to improve neighborhoods. Some of the uses for which the funding may be used are: public works improvements, preservation and rehabilitation of recreation areas, drainage, home improvement, and traffic and light fixtures.

The drain program, according to Dornan, is essential before other improvements can be made in the south end. Much of that area has been hampered with inadequate drainage, making it impossible to pave, he says.

"It's difficult even to maintain the housing stock when an area has flooding problems," he says.

A second public hearing will be conducted on Feb. 20, after which time the council will make its final decision. Grant approval will take until the middle of summer, according to Dornan.

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THANKS!

We would like to express sincere thanks to our carrier girls and boys, who last week displayed such great dedication in delivering the Thursday issue. The Blizzard of '78 may have slowed them down a while, but it didn't stop them. Our thanks also go to moms and dads of these young, independent businesspersons.