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Winter's rage

There was no respite from the wind's savage blast Friday as motorists discovered attempting to navigate the intersection at Grand River and Farmington Rd. in downtown Farmington (top). Others found themselves in the position of this Pinto's owner (bottom) as they tried to dig their cars out from under blankets of snow. High winds and numbing temperatures whipped most of the midwest into a swirl of ice-crested ridges, challenging even hard-core winter enthusiasts to a frigid duel both on and off the road. (Staff photos by Harry Mauths)

Probe is launched into public grants

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Although a second chance at federal public works grants could be forthcoming, cities such as Farmington Hills are wondering why their first applications were rejected.

In the face of mounting demands for an explanation of the way in which the \$2 billion dollars was distributed, the comptroller general's office has begun to investigate.

In addition, Congress plans to look at a bill which would put an additional \$4 billion into the public works grants kitty.

"The review of the procedures which were followed this time will affect the way the \$4 billion is handled," said Phillip Jourdan, a spokesman for U.S. Rep. William Brodhead (D-Detroit).

"With the additional \$4 billion, the cities that didn't get funds the first time would be given a second chance," he said.

If Congress allocates the funds, administrators are hoping that cities which were passed over will get first chance at the new grants, according to Jourdan.

Meanwhile, city administrators are joining congressmen in asking for an explanation of how the original \$2 billion in public works grants designed to ease unemployment were distributed.

FARMINGTON HILLS FINANCE DIRECTOR Gerard Miller is uncertain why his city's application for \$50,000 was rejected.

The funds would have paid for the second phase of the Waldron Drain construction, which is planned for the area bounded by Nine Mile, Eight Mile, Inkster Road and Middle Belt.

"The economic development agency (EDA) is holding application back because of the uncertainty about the additional fundings," he reported.

Farmington Hills administrators have said they want to review their application to find out why it was rejected.

"The EDA hasn't released much information on how the applications were scored. Even with the information they have released, I'm not sure how we compared with other cities," Miller said.

City administrators attempted to second guess the project administrators when the application was made.

"The EDA used unemployment in the project area as a factor for determining who received the funds, but they didn't assign it the weight both we and they thought they'd assign to it," Miller said.

ADMINISTRATORS ALSO thought that the Waldron Drain project would employ persons from an area stretching to Livonia. Such a broad area of possible employment was thought to increase Farmington Hills' chances at the money.

"We thought it would help us, but it reduced our rating, instead," Miller said.

Part of the problem seems to stem from the EDA's use of computers to tabulate forms, according to local officials and representatives in Washington.

"It seems that larger geographic areas didn't go through the computer," Miller said.

Some critics of the project say that the money went mainly to cities wanting to construct buildings. Miller disagrees with the assessment.

"About 20 per cent of the projects funded were sewage projects," he said. "A substantial amount seems to have gone to sewers."

Although Jourdan heard the same criticism, he tended to believe that distribution of the funds differed from state to state.

"I've heard horror stories of seemingly irreconcilable differences in the state-to-state distribution," he said.

"I'VE HEARD ENOUGH TO believe that the criteria that were used was faulty," he said.

"We've heard the critics say that much needed sewer and water projects which could have been approved under the act were not."

"But the answer I've heard to that criticism is that the money for those projects was available from another source," he said.

The distribution of the money was "capricious," according to Jourdan.

"Many mistakes were made in the selection process. There were projects in many communities which we thought had a higher priority."

"It was a slipshod way of doing business. The funds were given out before the end of an administration. They pushed too hard. They spent the funds too fast."

While the investigation slowly gets into motion, local administrators are still wondering why their projects were rejected.

"Obviously, if a project is rejected, we'd like to know why," Miller said.

Senior housing law is studied

Farmington Hills residents could be considered senior citizens on their 62nd birthday if a proposed special elderly housing zoning ordinance is passed.

Two years have been tacked onto the age limit since December, when Farmington Hills Housing Commission recommended an ordinance to reserve land for elderly housing.

Some citizens took a look at three amendments to the proposal during the housing commission's meeting at 8 p.m., Feb. 8, in city hall.

The ordinance has been bounced between the housing and planning commissions since their Jan. 6 joint meeting.

The amendments which came out of that session deal with the age of the residents, the height of the buildings, and availability of medical aid.

"The age limit was changed to 62 because that's the criteria the federal government uses," said Michael Dorman, administrative assistant.

"Age 60 isn't used by as many regulatory bodies to determine if a person is considered elderly," he said.

The commissions could have considered 65 as the beginning of old age.

BETWEEN 62 and 65 seems to be the age bracket in which agencies make make the distinction between an older, middle-aged resident and an elderly one," Dorman said.

Under the proposal, spouses can live in senior citizens residences if one mate has reached 62.

Another proposed provision to the ordinance would require owners of the residences to obtain permission from city council to set aside an area in the complex for residents' visits with physicians.

The addition of a medical area would turn the residence into a business, as well, according to Dorman.

The last of the new recommendations deals with limiting the height of the building to 60 feet.

Seniors who advocate the zoning, will have to wait a while before shopping around for a residence built especially for them. After the housing com-

mission meets with seniors, the proposal goes back to the planning commission.

Members of the city council will get a chance to review the proposal afterwards.

THE MOVE TOWARD A SENIOR CITIZEN zoning, to reserve land for elderly housing will be accomplished in two steps.

If the proposal is approved by the city council, the city will be faced with the task of formulating a senior citizens housing code, which would regulate the conditions within the residences, said Dorman.

"It's illegal for us to put in provisions for inspection and review of the residences in the zoning amendment," Dorman explained.

"That's why we need a housing code to give us that control," he said.

"The first priority of the council is to deal with the land use by the senior citizens," he said.

The idea of zoning land exclusively for senior citizens' residences came up after the Nardineers unsuccessfully tried to build a senior residence behind the Nardin Park Methodist Church, Eleven Mile and Middle Belt, last summer.

The Nardineers are anxious for the ordinance to be passed. They have a one-year option to buy the land behind the church. That option expires in April.

If the commissions and the council work on the ordinance past April, the Nardineers would have to renegotiate with the church.

GOP meets Wednesday

Farmington Republican Club meets Wednesday to hear State Rep. Sandy Brotherton (R-Farmington) talk on the past election results.

The meeting will begin at 8 p.m. in Botsford Inn.

Persons interested in learning about the workings of the club are invited to call Lynn Romero, 476-2880.

METAL COWBOY

Farmington Hills sculptor Bob Grieves, a sign painter by profession, enjoys the challenge of sculpting with metal. See page 3A for a peek into the lifestyle and intricate of a self-taught artist who relies on nature and the western motif for inspiration.

Quiet fund takes care of residents

A nickel and dime rummage sale, which took place 15 years ago, is still profiting needy families in the Farmington school district.

The Farmington PTA Council emergency fund quietly helps families through times of need.

It began with \$90 that was raised through a rummage sale. It continues through contributions of \$10-\$25 that trickle into the office of Nick Abid, principal of Willma Grace Elementary School.

But lately, the fund has begun to dwindle, now containing about \$100. Abid expects that the amount will rise.

"The PTAs have been beautiful about it," he said.

Administered by Abid, the fund gives small sums of money, usually about \$25 to help families through difficult times.

"We help families within the school district who demonstrate a need. We are not welfare."

"We don't give continuous payments," he explained.

The fund helps persons who need money immediately but are hung up by the red tape of formal agencies. They are referred to the fund by nurses, teachers and neighbors.

Last year, a public health nurse discovered that an elderly Farmington resident was doing without her medicine because her welfare checks had stopped arriving.

THE NURSE REFERRED her patient to the fund. Within 24 hours, the woman was taking her medicine again, thanks to \$20 from the PTA.

"Usually the people get what they need within 24 hours," Abid said. Sometimes volunteers will buy the groceries for a family who needs them.

"We don't hand the money over," Abid said. "We want to help, especially the kids in the district. But we do ask for a receipt."

The fund annually gives out between \$400-\$500.

Besides groceries for families awaiting welfare aid, the fund also tries to help students.

'We help families in the north as well as the south end of the district. The north end families have their own special problems, too.'

—NICK ABID

A junior high school student needed a pair of gym shoes that his family could not afford at the moment. The case was referred to Abid by the student's counselor. For \$20 and a 20 per cent discount, the fund bought a pair for the student.

Another student was despondent about his parents' pending divorce.

"We thought we could help him out a little, to cheer him up. We bought new pedals for his bicycle. It was a little thing and it didn't help the immediate situation but it showed him that

people cared for him," Abid remembered.

"We found out about him from one of his teachers," he said.

THE FUND contributed \$5.90 for a child's medicine after a health nurse referred the case to the PTA emergency fund.

Some of the families remember the fund when they get back on their feet and repay the amount they received. Repayment, however, isn't a condition for receiving aid.

"These people have a lot of pride. The people who have come on to hard times and need a little help. We can come to the rescue with a bag of groceries," Abid said.

"We don't want anyone to feel that it's charity."

"We help families in the north as well as the south end of the district. The north end families have their own special problems, too," he said.

The emergency fund tries to help whenever possible. But once in a while it will come upon a situation that puzzles the fund's administrators.

Recently Abid heard about a family who needs to have a furnace installed.

"We don't know what it would cost to hook up the furnace. The family has a space heater for warmth. But we don't know what to do about the furnace," he said.

In frosty Farmington

Icy pipes keeps DPW running

This winter's all-too-generous helpings of snow, ice and drifts are topped off with a problem that has gone underground.

An early frost, which has penetrated six feet underground, has played havoc with the water lines of Farmington and its neighbors.

"We've had 16 water lines frozen so far, this winter," reported Farmington Department of Public Works' head David Jones.

"We've had 19 water lines break this winter. This is an unusually high amount. Usually, there are three to four a winter and that's a lot," Jones said.

Farmington Hills' water lines are repaired by Oakland County DPW. Frozen or broken water lines have affected businesses and homes as well as schools.

"We've had three breaks on school

grounds," Jones said.

One break was located in the water line behind the Farmington School's Administration building on Shiassee. It took DPW crews one week to locate the break.

"The water was at the bottom of the hill, but the break wasn't located at that point," said City Mgr. Robert Deadman.

THE PROBLEM WAS complicated by five feet of frost which made it difficult for crews to dig down to the pipes.

Crews have worked to fix pipes in the business districts so that the stores could re-open the following day, according to Deadman.

"For the most part, 24 hours has been the maximum time that any business has had to shut down," he said.

"Most of them haven't been forced to close that long."

Residents are asked to be patient if their water line breaks.

"Sometimes, we shut off the water because there are two to three breaks at the same time. A person will sometimes call and wonder where the repairs crew are. They could be working at a break two streets over," Deadman said.

The increase in water line breaks will mean extra hours of over-time paid to DPW crews.

"The revenues produced by water and sewer billings will go toward paying the costs of the crews," Deadman explained.

Although the city won't know until the end of the winter how much the cold spell will cost, Deadman said residents' water and sewer bills won't rise.

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