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Senior citizen housing ruled inadequate

Elderly population outpaces facilities

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

'A significant portion of the city's population is simply not being adequately served.'
—Housing Commission

Farmington Hills is falling behind in its race to provide senior citizen housing, according to a report by the Hills Housing Commission.

Housing Commissioners appeared before the Planning Commission this week to give its report on how best the city can provide for the community's elderly residents.

"The demand for elderly citizen housing which can accommodate the special needs and desires of its older residents has begun to surpass the supply currently available," said the report.

"Consequently, a significant portion of the city's population is simply not being adequately served."

The Housing Commission study shows that by 1990 the city will need 1,310 units to house senior citizens. Commissioners estimate that 431 units will be available at that time so an additional 879 still will be needed.

Presently, the city is short 532 units, with 837 units needed and only 301 available.

RENTAL UNITS presently existing in the Hills are run by private organizations at Baptist Manor and Merion Oakland West. But even these units are filled to capacity, according to the report, and combined the projects have a waiting list of 1,000 persons.

Adding to the problem is rental for these projects, which commissioners cite as "significantly" higher than some elderly households are able to pay.

"The elderly population is reputed to be one of the nation's most distressed minorities. Loss of income is an ever-present problem for the elderly," says the commission's report.

In 1976, the federal government poverty level was established at \$3,700 or lower for a family of two. This level was increased to \$4,425 in 1977. United Community Services research shows that 11.3 per cent of elderly Farmington Hills residents were at the poverty level in 1976. In 1970 the figure rested at 6.1 per cent.

The use of the above percentages produce estimates of economically impoverished households of 206 in 1970.

418 in 1976 and 658 in 1980, according to the report. These numbers were increased by 25 per cent to include persons above the poverty level who also require housing support. This increase resulted in 332 households in 1976 and 823 by 1980 who are in need of housing subsidies to maintain an adequate standard of living.

But, if senior citizen housing is built, financial relief could be made available through funding from the federal government (see accompanying story), according to the commission's report.

Adding to the problem of actual rent cost for the elderly is the problem of inadequate zoning designations and expense of actually building senior citizen units.

Expense items listed by the commission were special health and safety features such as elevators, emergency signals in rooms and grab bars. Also needed are special medical equipment or personnel on the site to handle emergencies.

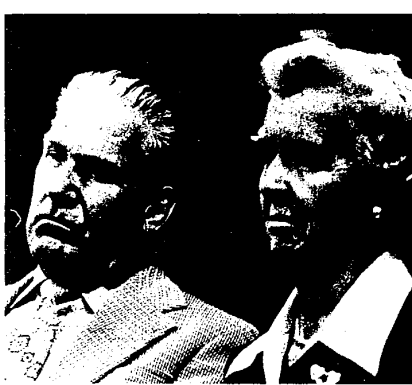
"BECAUSE OF THESE amenities, it would probably not be economically feasible for a developer to build senior citizen housing unless the subject was allowed more dwelling units per acre than ordinary multiple complexes," says the report.

"Hence, most housing for the elderly is in the form of medium or high-rise structures and these are very successful projects."

"Yet, because the city's zoning ordinance permits no multiple dwellings to be higher than 30 feet, it is highly unlikely that any developer could or would venture to construct any of this much needed housing in Farmington Hills in locations suitable to elderly citizen's needs."

The Housing Commission has recommended that the city's zoning ordinance

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Intent expressions tell the story of the recent Farmington Hills Planning Commission meeting. Ben Marks (top left) gestures as he makes his point to the Planning Commission. Housing Commissioner Marks is joined by the group's chairman Tom Czubiak. In the audience, Nardine's leader William Twigg (bottom left) and his wife, Florence, remain expressionless as they listen to the Housing Commission's report. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

Financial aid seen in HUD programs

If a senior citizen housing complex is ever built in Farmington Hills, the increasing number of elderly in Farmington Hills could receive financial rental aid through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

That's the word from the Farmington Hills Housing Commission, which presented its report on senior citizen housing zoning to the city's planning commission last week. The report called HUD financing the most feasible for such a project.

Under HUD section eight regulations, seniors living in the facilities could receive rent assistance equal to a maximum of 85 per cent of their payments.

Rent subsidy is a key to any senior citizen housing proposal since the housing commissions research revealed that 418 impoverished households are recorded for families whose members are 60 years or older. By 1980, this will amount to 658, according to the report.

By adding elderly households requiring subsidy housing units, the number rises to 523 in 1976 and an estimated 823 in 1980.

Number of subsidized units existing in 1976 was 251. By 1980, an estimated 572 additional units will be needed.

HUD FINANCIAL aid would be given to persons who have an annual income which is roughly one-half of

the median amount of income of an average Detroit metropolitan area family. HUD estimates that average to be \$18,250.

One person receiving \$9,125 a year would be eligible for a 75 per cent rent subsidy from HUD, according to Tom Czubiak, Housing Commission chairman. A couple who lives on \$11,680 a year would be eligible for the same amount of aid.

The maximum amount of aid, 85 per cent of the rent payment, would go to persons who receive \$5,475 a year, he said. Two persons receiving \$7,000 a year would receive the same amount of aid.

Tenants, depending on the size of the family and the income, would pay between 15-25 per cent of gross income for rent. Payments would be made directly to the owner.

For example, if a tenant's annual income is \$2,200, with a monthly income of \$190, he would pay about \$40 a month towards the \$290 a month rental payment. HUD would pick up the extra \$250, according to Czubiak.

Using the \$290 a month as the fair market rent, Czubiak explained that a tenant with an annual income of \$13,000 a year would pay the entire rent.

Under another HUD category, section 231, which refers specifically to seniors, four out of every 100 units would be built for the handicapped elderly.

District studies record ruling

The Freedom of Information Act, recently passed by the state legislature, becomes effective this Wednesday, which is why Farmington school officials are busy establishing procedures to cope with the complicated law.

Under the act, all persons are entitled to access to public records, which is defined as a writing prepared, owned, used in the possession of, or retained by a public body. The law does not require public bodies to make a compilation or summary of records, but when such summaries exist, the public body, including school boards, are mandated to release such information.

Some records are exempt from public disclosure, especially those which, upon their release, would interfere with a person's right to privacy, under federal law.

Jack Cotton, director of physical education and athletics, was recently appointed Freedom of Information officer, and it's his job to coordinate the district's procedures in administering the act.

"GUIDELINES WILL be sent to all the schools explaining our role as a result of this act, as well as a general explanation to the public," says Cotton.

The act was passed as a result of the public outcry concerning the uncovering of the State Police subversive files. However, school officials are concerned that the act may cause more problems than it's designed to eliminate.

School officials will have to determine if release of certain records violates the federal right to privacy act, which takes precedent over state law.

Until concrete guidelines are established, probably through the courts, it's up to the district to walk a fine line in releasing records, according to Cotton.

"Actually, our guidelines are a prototype," he says, adding that addresses and phone numbers of students and staff are considered exempt from the law.

Reports to inspect, copy or receive copies of public records may be made orally or in writing during business

hours, Monday through Friday, at the administration building, says Cotton.

When a request for a public record is received, the district will respond to the request in not more than five business days. During that time, the district will either grant the request, deny the request in writing, grant it in part or deny it in part; or issue a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the time period during which the board shall respond to the request.

NO MORE THAN TWO persons will be allowed to inspect records at any time, and the law allows for financial charges to be designated for the accommodation of requests.

Charges include: any actual mailing costs; the cost of copying the materials at the rate of 10 cents per page plus any labor costs; and the cost of the search, examination and review of the materials, billed at \$6 per hour, based on the least clerical salary with fringes.

Where the request for a public record is denied, in whole or in part, a written notice will be provided containing the explanation or basis for the denial. A statement of the requester's right to commence an action in circuit court to compel disclosure of the records, also will be included with the denial, says Cotton.

The following materials are considered public records that can be released to the public:

- Personnel files: The only disclosable items are the names of employees and salaries. Information which invades the privacy of the employee is non-disclosable, including telephone numbers; addresses; charitable contributions; marital status; reputation; medical condition; welfare payments; and other personally-identifying information.
- Student records: Only enrollment figures are available for public disclosure. No personal student data will be released.
- Budget files and budget printouts.
- Memo files: Memoranda which concerns students or staff, and which would be an invasion of privacy, are excluded from public review. Also ex-

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He'll keep working Founding reserve cop honored

After 20 years of service, Capt. John Gilin of the Farmington Reserve Public Safety Officers is leaving the force he helped to create.

Holding a plaque that Farmington Public Safety director Dan Byrnes handed to him in recognition of his time and effort for the group, Gilin reviewed the changes he has seen in the auxiliary group.

"There were 10 of us, originally," he said. "But that has grown to 18, today."

The auxiliary public safety group was originally a civil defense group in 1957, according to Byrnes.

"In 1959, the civil defense group got involved in auxiliary police work. They had little training. They couldn't carry arms. They didn't have rules and they didn't have any recognition."

"John was a major part of the changes that have taken place," Byrnes said.

It was Gilin who started the auxiliary officers taking training at

Schoolcraft College. Now, they receive 100 hours of instruction at the college in addition to classes given to them by the city, according to Byrnes.

THE LAST ORIGINAL MEMBER of the reserves still active in the group, Gilin, 50, credits his life-long fascination with police work for his great interest in the auxiliary.

"I wanted to be a cop when I was a kid," said Gilin, who makes his living as a printer.

"The reserves are a way to help the community and to do something that I enjoy. I have a great sense of pride about belonging to the group. I will always feel good about joining the reserves."

"It's almost like having another family," he added.

Although he enjoyed working with the group, he admits to feeling apprehensive when he was called upon to answer an open alarm at a bank.

"You don't know what's going to be waiting for you," he said.

During his time on the reserve force, he has done the chores of the regular public safety officers, from fighting fires to chasing suspects.

One incident he relates with a little prudence and some pride concerns his apprehension of a driver who hit a youngster riding a bicycle. The driver decided against stopping when he realized he hit the youth.

"I WAS IN A PATROL car on the scene when he was hit by another car. Our car rolled over onto the side of the road. While the officers were taking care of the persons who had hit us, I commandeered a car and caught the guy who hit the boy."

"The people who had hit us were injured when they went through the windshield," he added.

He received a citation for his quick action.

His attachment to the force has caused him to miss many evenings at home with his wife, Patricia. They have been married for 27 years.

Mrs. Gilin takes her husband's interest in the reserves in stride. "It's been great. We've made fantastic friends," she said.

Now that he has left the auxiliary, Gilin plans to devote more time to his family and his boat. But he also is committed to helping other communities set up their own auxiliary public safety force. Next month, he is scheduled to travel to Wisconsin.

"The chief there realizes there's a need for a better reserve program," he said.

When he returns home, he'll still be faced with police work. Two of his three daughters are married to Detroit policemen. The third is dating a policeman.



Farmington Public Safety Reserve Capt. John Gilin (left) accepts a plaque from Public Safety Director Dan Byrnes. Gilin was honored upon his retirement after 20 years in the reserves.

inside

TOYS, TOYS, TOYS

Toys have changed with the times and the whimsies of the younger set. To find out what our favorites are lurking behind new toys, turn to page 3A.

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