

# Farmington Observer

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## League wants answers from Hills city manager

By LYNN ORR

Farmington Hills City Mgr. George Majors still has some questions to answer concerning the hiring of a community development consultant, as far as some local officials are concerned.

The protests over the employment of Maureen Lowe came after it was revealed in June that Mrs. Lowe was an undicted co-conspirator in an Oakland County investigation of the Community Development Program. Although Mrs. Lowe has never faced criminal charges, she was fired by the county last fall and reinstated by circuit court order. She subsequently resigned in December, 1977.

She was hired by Farmington Hills as independent contractor in the Neighborhood Improvement Program in April.

Despite a written response from Majors to questions raised by the Farmington-West Bloomfield League of Women Voters concerning the hiring of Ms. Lowe, the League is "standing by what we said before — that poor judgement was used in hiring Maureen Lowe," said League President Mary Lazaraton.

The League also "took it very seriously having our sincerity ques-

tioned," Mrs. Lazaraton said after a special League board meeting last Wednesday.

"WE'RE SUPPOSED to be community watchdogs, and we do act on things that we feel are important."

In a letter to Mrs. Lazaraton reprinted in this edition, Majors wrote that he "can't help but wonder if you and the League were really sincere in requesting an answer to legitimate questions or whether your purpose was to use the newspaper to editorialize your position."

Mrs. Lazaraton's letter posing questions about the hiring of Mrs. Lowe was published in the July 31 edition of the Observer.

County Commissioner Robert McConnell (R-25th District in Farmington Hills) is a former member of the Hills City Council, also has questions. Majors makes reference to McConnell in his letter, stating that if he (McConnell) knew any reason why Mrs. Lowe shouldn't be working for the city, he did not share the information with city officials.

"I dispute that," McConnell said last week. He stated that Majors didn't tell him about hiring Mrs. Lowe until after the fact.

"My recollection is that I wouldn't

touch her with a 40 foot pole at the moment," McConnell said in reference to her past problems with the county. He added that Majors and his assistant, Mike Dornan, first called the county's attention to problems in the program in 1976, the result of complaints from a Farmington Hills resident.

Majors admitted a few weeks ago

that he was aware that Mrs. Lowe might be involved in alleged irregular practices at the county and forwarded that information to the County Executive Daniel Murphy.

An audit was conducted of the loans and grants program at the request of Murphy, with information received from many sources including County Commissioner Jack McDonald (R-27th

District in Farmington). McConnell explained.

McDonald wrote a letter to Murphy dated Dec. 13, 1976, outlining problems with the county's Community Development Program. One of the irregularities mentioned by McDonald makes reference to Mrs. Lowe and a possible question about her husband's employ-

ment as a subcontractor under the program.

A copy of the letter was sent to Majors. The audit, issued in September, 1977, names Mrs. Lowe extensively in the report, McConnell said.

The report's findings allege irregularities concerning Mrs. Lowe. Those findings, however, were disputed by (Continued on page 2A)

## Majoros' letter

*Editor's note: The following letter, written by Farmington Hills City Mgr. George Majoros, is a response to a letter from Mary Lazaraton, president of the Farmington-West Bloomfield League of Women Voters, printed in the July 31 edition of the Farmington Observer.*

*Her questions were: "Exactly why did the city manager's office persist in hiring Ms. Lowe when admittedly the city manager 'agonized' over choosing her? How hard did the city manager's office try to find someone else to fill the Neighborhood Improvement Program job? Was the job posted at city hall, advertised in the newspapers, publicized in the target area? Can the city manager's office explain how on one hand it took credit for helping to expose the Oakland County Community Development program conspiracy two years ago and, then, on the other hand, turned around and hired one of the persons involved in it—especially when the case is still in litigation?"*

Mrs. Mary Lazaraton 3422 Gloucester Circle Farmington Hills, Mich.

Dear Mrs. Lazaraton: I am taking the liberty of replying to the letter you wrote to the Editor of the Farmington Observer, a copy of which you sent to the mayor and "Councilpersons" for reply to two questions.

I am distressed that you chose this method of obtaining an answer to your questions. Since the League of Women Voters has in the past always had immediate access to me and my staff, I can't help but wonder if you and the League were really sincere in requesting an answer to

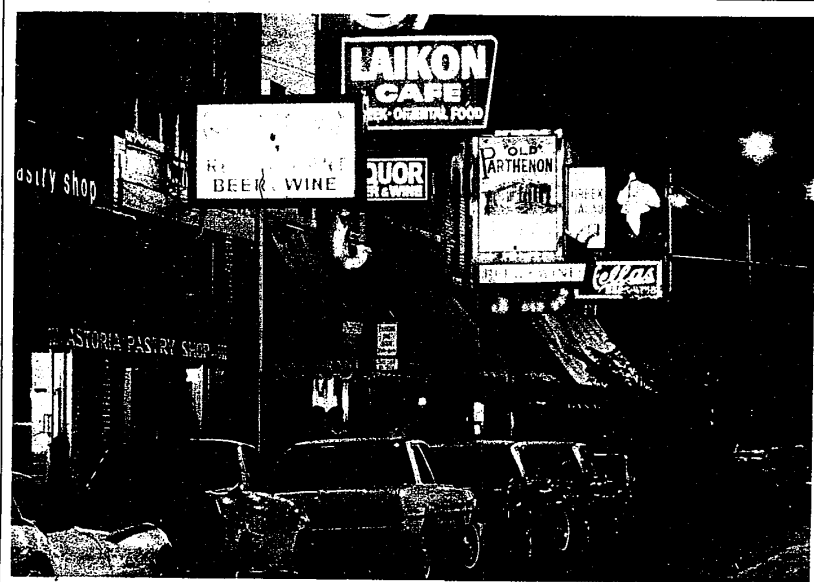
legitimate questions or whether your purpose was to use the newspaper to editorialize your position. If you had bothered to talk to me personally before you wrote that letter, you would not have had to depend upon the highly-biased and inaccurate account of the Maureen Lowe story contained in the July 20, 1978 issue of the Observer.

The key premise in the newspaper article and editorial was that I was aware that Mrs. Lowe was involved in irregularities in the county program before she came to Farmington Hills. Nothing could be further from the truth. As substantiated by the enclosed copy of a letter from the Office of the Oakland County Prosecuting Attorney, no public allegations had been made against Mrs. Lowe before she came to Farmington Hills. Allegations were made only against her supervisors. The County Executive, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney and County Commissioner Robert McConnell knew she was working in our program. If any of them knew any reason why she should not be working here, they certainly did not share that information with me.

NOW I SHALL attempt to answer your two "when did you stop beating your wife" questions. Before I do, however, may I correct your statement that she was "fired"? Mrs. Lowe resigned because she said "she did not feel like working anymore."

1. Mrs. Lowe was not hired as a regular employee. She was engaged as an independent contractor. She was paid by voucher check, not by payroll check, and received no fringe benefits. I "agonized" before she came because I suspected that since she worked in the same office for supervisors alleged to be involved in

(Continued on page 2A)



## In the heart of the city

Those who think Detroit has no nightlife owe themselves a visit to Greektown. Long before the Renaissance Center was even a dream, Greektown has been pulling suburbanites to the heart of the city. Where Motown crosses St. Antoine, there is a constant

stream of visitors any night of the week. Diners frequently stand in line outdoors for a dinner of lamb with a glass of retsina. For more on Greektown, turn to page 8A. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

## Festival organizers seek payment

# Fireworks have faded; bills remain

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Now that the fireworks have faded and Sunday in the Park is another memory, the bills for the 1978 Farmington Founders' Festival are arriving.

This year, about \$17,000 was spent on the annual festival, according to its chairman Terry Seaver.

Of that total, Seaver is hoping Farm-

ington merchants will help him pay off the remaining \$1,812 in festival bills.

Funds for the festival are a mixture of revenue from concession stands and booths as well as the bank balance left over from last year's event.

In addition, contributions from merchants are included in estimating the budget.

Financing a festival involves a system of finance probably best described

as spending non-existent money. This year, the festival plans were gathering steam in January.

Festival funds didn't start rolling in until the weather turned steamy in early summer.

"A LOT OF people don't start thinking about the festival until it's 80 degrees out," explained Seaver.

"Our best results was the first week we had good weather," he said.

Until then, Seaver and the rest of the festival committee were planning the event by guessing at the amount of money they could raise.

In the festival coffers was \$1,494.79 from the preceding year along with \$3,915.50 from contributions. Fees for booths and concessions brought in \$1,465.

The committee estimated that it would receive \$1,100 in contributions from businesses that were participating in the festival and another \$2,933.95 from merchants who have a record of donating to the event.

Of those estimated funds, Seaver has received about \$1,100.

This year's festival cost \$1,500 more than last year's event because several of the activities were broadened, according to Seaver.

Fireworks has cost the festival \$1,500 in past years. The funds for this

year's display were donated by Metro Bank in Farmington. This year, Seaver budgeted in an additional \$1,000 for a larger display.

ANOTHER new but more mundane expense was \$200 for porta-johns. The facilities were absent from previous festivals.

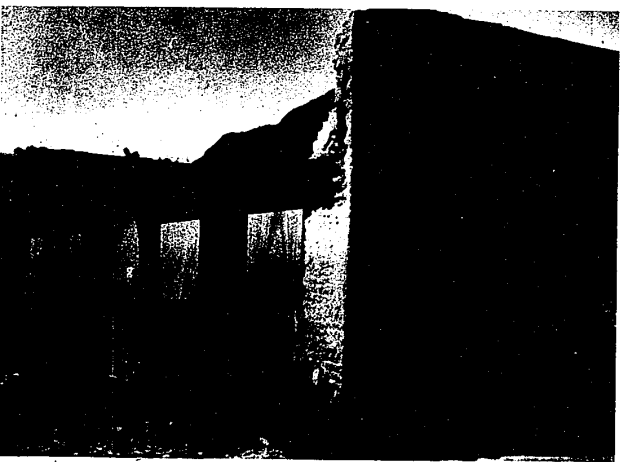
Liability insurance cost the committee \$1,280 this year.

Already taken care of by Bob Saks' Oldsmobile is the cost of another innovation, the elephant ride. The pachyderm owner Murray Hill charged a fee of \$2,000 for four days. Of that \$1,112 was earned by riders who paid \$1 to imitate Tarzan's ride. The remainder was paid by Saks'.

Another item taken off the budget was the money making Wild Wheelie Weekend. That accumulated \$5,000 in three days for the sponsoring Jaycees. Co-sponsor of the event, the Wolvering 4-wheel drive club earned about \$4,000 for the three days.

One event which was pure expense was the parade, which cost \$3,000 this year.

## Waack's to face wrecker's ball



The walls of Waack's Bar will come tumbling down if the Farmington Hills City Council has its way.

Waack's, which added its share of color to the city's south side since 1933, was gutted by fire in early January.

Since then, the building's shell has stood on Grand River, attracting youngsters who saw it as a play area, according to Hills building inspector Richard Lampi.

If the council realizes its wish, those walls will meet the wrecker's ball in early October. At a recent meeting, councilmembers voted to set a Sept. 1 deadline to condemn the building. The owners of the property have until 10 days after that to demolish the building on their own before the city begins to take bids for the project.

The process would end in Waack's demise in the first week of October.

Waack's new owners, Eli Orestry of Birmingham and James Patrick Addison of Grosse Pointe Woods, bought the bar from Loraine Waack last year.

A DISPUTE between the new owners and the bar's insurance company over the size of the cash settlement has delayed the demolition of the building, according to Willis Snyder, attorney for Orestry and Addison.

Asking the council to delay the condemnation order until October, Snyder explained the owners wanted to permit an Oakland County Circuit Court umpire to view the ruins before deciding the dispute.

**inside**

- Suburban Life.....Section B
- Sports.....Section C
- Classified.....Section C
- The Inside Angle.....3A
- A la mode.....3B
- Community Calendar.....4B
- Editorial Page.....10B

NEWSLINE.....352-5400  
CLASSIFIED LINE.....591-0900



George Still, choral director for Musical Youth International, recently returned from an overseas tour with area teens who won top honors in an international competition. Story in Suburban Life, 1B.

Early this year, fire gutted Waack's Bar, a local watering hole with its share of colorful history. The empty building has been condemned by the city and could meet the wrecking ball by early October.