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Church crusades for low income housing

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Federally funded senior citizen and low income housing for Farmington Hills has received a shot in the arm from the Christian Service Commission of Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church.

In its statement, circulated through last Sunday's parish bulletin, the commission lauded attempts by those civic leaders striving for the federal programs. At the same time, it blasted those persons who oppose the programs whether out of racial fear or political philosophy.

For the past three years Farmington Hills has been embroiled in the senior citizen zoning battle.

It came to a head this summer when the city council cancelled its contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Community Development Block Grant funds after two meetings where from 300-500 residents protested the programs.

The Sorrows Commission statement is the first formal endorsement of the program by an organization. Its statement comes on the heels of a city council decision to put the mid-rise senior housing question on the ballot as an advisory vote in November.

Commission representative Marguerite Kowaleski defended the stand, saying it was the parish's obligation to address what she termed a moral question.

FATHER KEAN CRONIN, Sorrows pastor, also endorsed the statement.

"The call for continuing concern for those who are elderly and/or in an income bracket that makes living precarious is no less urgent," said Cronin in the bulletin which contained the message.

Mrs. Kowaleski was more explicit. "The church must take stands on moral issues. This commission just can't be concerned with immediate needs. There haven't been many people speaking out in support of senior citizen and low income housing. We have," she said.

'The unspoken fears of who the outsiders might be and what effect they might have on the neighborhood and community are perhaps as important as any of the openly stated objections to the program. The fears center around blacks and the poor.'

—Christian Service Commission

Many persons in the Farmington Hills area, although silent in the past, are in support of the senior citizen and low income housing concept, she said.

The commission's statement defended its right to speak out. In past months opponents to senior citizen zoning and low income housing have criticized local clergy who have come out in its support.

"Christian concern for the poor means nothing if those who call themselves Christians fail to speak out and act when a basic human right such as decent shelter is denied or threatened for so many," said the statement.

"But against these principles are the

beliefs of some citizens that those who want to live in more affluent suburban communities should 'earn' the right to do so, or that the 'rights' of present residents to decide who shall reside there supercede the rights and needs of the larger citizenry."

To support its stand, the commission quoted from the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter of 1975.

"Suburban communities must recognize and act on their responsibilities without utilizing improper zoning, overly rigid building codes, onerous referendum requirements, or other barriers to avoid contact with the less affluent," said the bishops' statement.

The commission came to HUD's defense, saying that although some of its programs have failed, others have helped communities.

"There is no evidence that the over \$1 million of Community Development funds channeled thus far into Farmington Hills has done anything but improve the serious drainage situation in the southeast section."

The commission pointed to other Oakland County communities which have used HUD funds successfully and said that rejecting HUD funds because of past failures was an overreaction.

HUD money has been used for other facilities in the area, the commission pointed out, noting the construction of new garage facilities in Farmington and expansion of Farmington Hills city hall.

"A concerned, efficiently run community need not fear an unseen bureaucracy controlling community's subsidized housing," the report.

The statement also dealt with those persons who "profess abhorrence of government subsidies."

"Indirect tax subsidies primarily through deduction of mortgage interest and property taxes are used by most homeowners in areas such as Farmington and account for a far larger share of federal housing assistance than do funds provided for low income citizens," said the report.

Fear of racial and economic segregation also was addressed by the commission.

"The unspoken fears of who the 'outsiders' might be and what effect they might have on the neighborhood and community are perhaps as important as any of the openly stated objections to the program."

"The fears center around blacks and the poor."

"Under the Community Development program for a 90-day period 15 per cent of a low income units must be reserved for minority applicants or others not presently residing in the community."

"There comes a time when concern for the needs of all the citizens must be seen as the higher priority. Perhaps this is the time."

Shiawassee is shutting doors at end of year

The Farmington Board of Education voted unanimously Tuesday night to close Shiawassee Elementary School at the end of the current school year.

The board's action was taken on the recommendation of a task force studying the effects of declining enrollment in the district, which includes Farmington, most of Farmington Hills and a portion of West Bloomfield.

The district is anticipating an enrollment drop of 2,500 pupils by the 1980-81 school year—from 13,272 to 10,717. The closing will save the schools \$175,000.

Shiawassee's 354 kindergarten through sixth grade students will be split between Larkshire and William Grace elementary schools.

Most residents opposed to the school closing voiced their objections at a public hearing two weeks ago, but there were two residents who spoke Tuesday.

Carol Edley asked the board to establish a walkway route from the furthest point students will walk, 1.2 miles at Fink and Violet streets, to Larkshire School.

Board Trustee Richard Wallace said he would intercede with city officials to establish a shorter walk route if one is possible.

Another resident praised and chided the board in her speech.

"I've talked to people who were at the public hearing that I was unable to attend. They said they left with a positive feeling from the board," said Kathy Devine. "I'm pleased to hear they felt they were listened to. But you are probably making a terrible mistake."

Board member Michael Shpiece said the board "is ready to do whatever it can to accommodate the children."

Added board president Helen Frutw: "The decision is regretful, but it had to be made. We all know the story of declining enrollment and how it has affected our district."

Shiawassee joins Cloverdale, Bond, Farmington Junior High, Ten Mile and Fairview schools—all closed due to declining enrollment.

School Supt. Lewis Schulman said yesterday morning that the board will consider next the closing of Highmeadow Elementary School no later than the 1980-81 school year.

"The task force's recommendation regarding Highmeadow will be discussed at the second meeting of the board in February," he said.

Also expected to add to declining enrollment is the start of a middle school format by the 1980-81 school year. The district will lose 1,780 elementary school students over the next three years. The system will take sixth graders out of elementary schools and replace them with seventh and eighth grade students.

Experts believe the middle school format will save the school district money and result in a better use of space. That plan was approved by a task force of school administrators and parents following a year-long study.

State Senator Doug Ross (D-Oak Park) will be the guest speaker at the Farmington Chamber of Commerce next Monday at the Farmington Holiday Inn beginning at 8 a.m. Those wishing to make reservations should call the Chamber office at 474-3440. Ross' district includes Farmington, Farmington Hills and Southfield.



Man and his best friend have a growing relationship through the years, as is demonstrated by Ernie Sako and his Doberman pal, Nipper. But unlike this pair sometimes owner and pet have to be separated through the years in this where the dog kennel comes into action. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Pampered pets enjoy life in Farmington's kennels

By MARY GNIEWEK

Though dog is supposed to be man's best friend, there comes a time when business or pleasure pursuits necessitate a separation between pet and owner.

If no one is available to babysit Fido for the duration, owners can choose from a variety of kennels and doggie motels anxious and willing to put up your pet for a price.

BOTH FARMINGTON AND Farmington Hills offer a variety of such establishments. Some advertise heated or air conditioned facilities (depending on the season), individual fire-proof stalls, and tender loving care.

"We have an easier time accommodating the dogs than their owners," admitted Bill McCoy, owner of Waldeslust Kennels in Farmington.

"Sometimes, people leave a big bag of toys. Some request we give their pet two pieces of toast in the morning. They write out long lists of instructions. We'll sing them to sleep at night, too," he joked.

McCoy said even the most strong animal, scared by new environs, is apt to settle down in a couple of days.

"It's a traumatic experience for some dogs, but most of them don't mind. In fact, I think some of them look forward to it."

AT WALDESLOST, GERMAN for "woodland joy," all breeds of dogs and cats are boarded in heated, indoor four-foot by four foot stalls. The individual stalls are attached to four-by-20-foot outdoor runs.

Dogs are fed each night a frozen preparation of meat, protein and vitamin stocked food. For sleeping comfort, the canines are bedded down in cedar shavings.

Accommodations are limited to 30 animals. The price varies with the size of the pet: from \$3 daily for cats to \$6 a day for Great Danes and Irish Wolfhounds.

McCoy has run his business for 25 years. Like most kennel operators, he also breeds dogs. His specialties are German Shepherds and Pembroke Welsh Corgis (a favorite of the Queen of England). The pedigreed pets sell for \$200.

AT DOG GONE Acres in Farmington Hills, new owner Jan Sako says tender loving care is the key ingredient to a happily boarded pet.

"Our staff is dog-oriented. We understand the trauma and win them over with affection."

Sako has run the kennel for less than a year, boarding cats, dogs and an occasional skunk.

"I have a good rapport with animals. I know each one is precious to its owner and I try to create the same atmosphere."

(Continued on page 12A)

Hills firm ranked top in merger

By C.J. RISAK

The merging of the Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America with the Maryland Life Insurance Company of Baltimore has established the Farmington firm as the largest life insurance company based in Michigan.

The merger, which was completed on Dec. 31, vaulted Alexander Hamilton Life into the top 10 per cent of life insurance companies in the United States.

Alexander Hamilton Life was founded in Plymouth in 1964, and moved to its present location at 3345 Hamilton in Farmington in 1967. In March 1977, the firm was purchased by the Household Finance Corp., which also owned Maryland Life. During 1977, Maryland Life moved its headquarters from Chicago to the Alexander Hamilton Life building in Farmington, although the two continued to work as separate entities until last December.

"Reduction of operating costs, simplifying our operation, and consolidating our functions was the reason behind our merging," Vernon Lunn, vice-president in charge of corporate services, said.

As a result of the merger, Alexander Hamilton Life (the name under which the company will continue to operate) nearly doubled in size. The firm has a sales force of 2,400 independent life insurance agents in 49 states (all but New York), the District of Columbia, and all provinces of Canada.

THE COMPANY, which has a work force of 975 employees in its Farmington headquarters, reached \$110 million in total income from premiums and \$450 million in assets in 1978.

The growth of this firm started in November of 1972. Richard H. Headlee was elected president and chief executive officer, a position which he still holds. The company did a complete turnaround, recovering from a \$1.4 million loss in 1972 to a \$2.6 million gain in 1973. Headlee's first year on the job.

Alexander Hamilton Life deals with life insurance, from the ordinary policies to various specialty credit insurance policies. Future goals are to "consolidate and refine our operations," according to Lunn.

"We plan to continue to develop and expand our insurance products for our customers."

General Motors Corp. had insisted it needed the 50 per cent tax break for 12 years, the maximum allowed by state law, before it would commit itself to build an addition to its engine machining plant on Middlebelt, north of Plymouth Road.

A GM spokesman said after the council action that the company will analyze the situation and make a decision.

Eight-year tax break for GM

Livonia City Council Wednesday night approved an eight year property tax break for a proposed \$102 million Cadillac engine assembly plant.

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