

Farmington Observer

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Hills hopefuls trade blows over housing

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

City council credibility was the call of the evening at last week's candidate night sponsored by the Farmington Area Democratic Club.

Eight Farmington Hills candidates, vying for four seats in the Nov. 6 election, traded blows over how well the present council has communicated with the public.

At the core of the debate was the senior citizen/low income housing project slated for construction on Freedom and Drake roads.

Two incumbents, Jan Dolan and Joanne Smith, are fighting for reelection.

Both are staunch supporters of the housing project.

"The council has failed miserably to listen to the people," said council hopeful William Lange. The Detroit Edison lawyer is opposed to the project.

"We have seen recall attempts, referendum petitions and city hall has been the scene of irate citizens. The only time the council listens is when their futures are at stake," he said.

Lange has vowed that he will restore credibility to and confidence in city government.

Councilmember Joanne Smith defended the council's record, saying it has studied, planned and communicated

in its attempt to run the city.

"When you sit on the council, you learn about budgets. We run a tight ship. We have prepared for the rainy day and it has hit. Now we are able to dip into the unappropriated funds," she said.

SHE REJECTED the idea of what she termed as "grandiose plans" to solve community problems.

"We know that there have been some communication problems," she said, but said the council has attempted to reach the residents through newsletters and the newspapers.

"In the next four years, we will have

an open, forthright and honest council," she said.

Candidate Donn Wolf, also an Edison employee, zeroed in on the communication problem.

"The attitude of this council is that 'we know better than you' when addressing the public," he said.

"I'll listen to the people," he vowed.

Wolf also blasted the council for what he termed a lack of experience with issues which come before it.

"They lack the know-how on the council. It is important to know what is happening in Lansing and Washington," he said.

Wolf works in the political wing at

Edison and says his experience with governmental affairs will be a plus for the council.

He also is in opposition to the present housing plan which will be financed by bonds sold through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

MRS. DOLAN accused the housing opponents of communication problems by passing out some bogus information themselves.

"There are people who have said that 85 percent of persons in the housing will be imported from Mississippi. That just isn't true," she said.

She defended the council's record in

studying the housing issue, saying it has studied alternatives for three years.

Candidate Michael O'Hair, who supports the housing project, said he is reluctant to ally himself with either side because of the "gymnastic decision making" and emotionalism which has surrounded the issue.

A virtual political unknown in Farmington Hills, O'Hair has vowed to add an important decision making quality to the council if he is elected.

Although supporting the housing program, O'Hair has stressed that other issues

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Court costs up, but who pays?

By MARY GNIEWEK

Farmington city officials, 47th district court judges, and state representatives all seem to support a state-financed district court system, but when it comes to deciding on just how such a plan could be financed, they don't always see eye to eye.

The Farmington City Council made its latest plug in support of state-financed district courts at its council meeting last week. Council members say that while the city has been suffering from inflation, especially regarding continued financial support of the 47th district court, it has no local control over the court.

State officials agree in principle with state financing for district courts, but claim there is no money for them now.

State Senator Doug Ross, D-Oak Park, says the state cannot take on the multi-million dollar expense because the Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment puts a limit on government spending.

State Representative Wilbur Brotherton, R-Farmington, says the state cannot finance district courts until the Wayne County court system is reorganized.

"The state has been crying for the last four or five years that it can't afford to finance district courts," said Farmington City Manager Bob Deadman. "Yet they keep adding new duties to the court system. We're financing part of the circuit court system by providing substitute district judges.

"AND THE STATE keeps broadening the jurisdiction of local courts. Then we have to pay the bill on the local level. It's about time the state pays for the system it has set up," he added.

This year, Farmington's bill for court-related services is \$82,000. That's 20 percent of the cost it shares based on proportion, with Farmington Hills, which pays \$265,000 or 80 percent of

the \$347,000 expense.

The state picks up a proportion of the district judge's salary, which is not to exceed \$47,000.

Judge Michael Hand, Farmington-47th District, thinks state financing for local courts is coming, but not in the near future.

"We worked for this when I was president of the Michigan District Judges Association in 1975. We pushed hard," Hand said. "But it came at a bad time — right after the oil crises of 1974. I'm not sure the state is in a better financial situation now."

Hand said the current system is unfair to some communities.

"It's a financial strain for county commissions in districts where two-thirds of the land in the district is owned by the state, which provides no revenue. Farmington is lucky because it's an affluent community," Hand said.

State issued fines, which are processed through district courts, are paid to the state library fund. In civil cases, 65 percent of the filing fees are retained locally, 35 percent are remitted to the state. A \$5 judgement fee in all criminal cases is sent to Lansing for the state pension fund.

HAND SAID a system in which all fines would be remitted to the state, and the state in turn would pay all court costs, would simplify bookkeeping and make uniform all district court operations.

Brotherton said the legislature passed a law, Public Act 111, this year which shifts the burden of district court costs from local to state government over a five-year period.

"But there's one hang-up. We can't begin this until the Wayne County court system is reorganized," he said. "I agree with this in principle mainly because the level of services vary from community to community. Some cities make



Local rocker

Mark Kernicky, a 19-year-old Farmington musician, plays the bass for the H-Band during the battle of the bands last Thursday afternoon at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills. Story and more photos on Page 3A.

Seniors pack aging seminar

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Almost 300 seniors picked up a few pointers in such fields as consumerism and law during the Farmington Area Commission on Aging's seminar, "Aging, the Art of Living."

The seminar in the Gathering Place last Friday and Saturday acquainted seniors with information which could make their lives a little easier.

Insurance and probate were among the chief topics addressed. Seniors were cautioned to avoid purchasing mail-order insurance policies.

"It's a rip off," said Sr. Darlene Westling, a specialist in aging from the Archdiocese of Detroit.

"It's not worth it," she added.

"Many of the mail-order hospital insurance policies don't go into effect until after the owner of the policy has been in the hospital for 10 days. Most routine hospital stays have ended by that time," said Sr. Darlene.

Most insurance won't pay off double benefits. That means if Medicare covers the hospital stay, then the mail-order insurance company won't duplicate that payment. Or the mail order insurance may split the hospitalization costs with Medicare.

"EITHER way, you're not getting more coverage by adding the mail order insurance," said Sr. Darlene.

Seniors can receive medical services which are free through various agencies, she added.

Tests for diabetes, flu shots and Pap tests as well as other routine checkups can be received free. The tester will refer the patient to his regular doctor if there needs to be further checkups and inoculations.

They can save money on medication by asking for the generic drug instead of the name-brand. On occasion a physician will insist on a name-brand drug.

In such instances, the pharmacist can't substitute a generic drug.

Consumer consciousness goes beyond saving money on insurance and in the drug store. It's a state of mind.

"Seniors are a particular problem as consumers. They're timid as consumers. They're afraid to complain. They're afraid to demand their rights. They sometimes don't know their rights," said Sr. Darlene.

"Seniors are the recipients of fraud more than any other group. They're afraid to question. They were taught to believe people."

AS WITH OTHER consumers, seniors must learn to question persons who want them to sign contracts. They must learn to take things back to the store if the item was defective. They must learn to be wary of potential rip-offs.

Another way they can safeguard their property is to make a correct will or be partners in jointly owned property.

Owning property jointly is one way of avoiding probate costs. When the owner dies, the property automatically is turned over to the other member of the joint ownership, according to attorney Dale Winnie of Romeo. Winnie, a former West Bloomfield corporate lawyer has made advising groups of seniors his personal project.

But joint ownership has its stumbling blocks. At times the owner doesn't want to give up the property by putting another person's name on the title.

In that case, Winnie suggests using a quit claim deed. This type of deed gives whatever ownership the senior has in the property to another person.

That, too, has its stumbling blocks.

"A quit claim deed settles the title in the property. Safeguarding it becomes

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Halloween fun awaits children

By MARY GNIEWEK

Shrill screams, creaky wooden floors, and damp rooms that smell musty from months of air tight confinement greet every visitor.

The house on the corner of Fourteen Mile and Haggerty roads grabs the senses with the grip of an Alfred Hitchcock mystery thriller.

It's a "goremet's" delight — if you'll pardon the play on words.

An outside staircase leads to an attic entrance. The first room is a blackened maze. The darkness is broken only by the appearance of a six-foot ghoul who leaps out at unsuspecting moments.

There is no turning back. Every hall-

way and room leads to another. Each gets progressively worse.

In one room, a noose swings slowly from a ceiling peg in an iridescent setting. In another, blood-splattered kitchen appliances are the backdrop for a mad scientist's laboratory. Possibly he is readying his victims for a coffin-filled room nearby.

In the basement, one room features a giant spider web and the ample spider it took to build it. Move along through the real cobwebs of the old farmhouse built in 1933 to the room of the open graves.

"This is where the West Bloomfield police came last Wednesday," said Terry Sever, chairman of the board for

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Gotcha! A toothless, wild-haired monster rises from repose to grab his next victim. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

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NEWS LINE 477-5450
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TURNOVER TROUBLE

Turnovers were the problem last Thursday at Farmington High's girls' basketball team lost to Livonia Stevenson, 46-40, in an Inter Lakes League game. Farmington coach Bob Lekovich wasn't at the game. He'll be spending the next week to 10 days in Providence Hospital as the result of an emergency gall bladder operation last Monday.