

# Farmington Observer

Volume 91 Number 27

Thursday, January 17, 1980

Farmington, Michigan

68 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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## Alternative plans studied

# Council dumps zoning for senior housing

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

The first steps have been taken to rescind an ordinance allowing 60-foot senior citizen structures in Farmington Hills.

In a 5-2 vote, the city council ordered the planning commission to "implement the results" of the November advisory vote. In that vote, a majority of voters casting ballots rejected the RCE-1 concept allowing 60-foot structures.

Voting to remove RCE-1 from the books were Mayor Joann Soronen, and

Council Members Joe Alkateeb, Jack Burwell, William Lange and Donn Wolf.

Voting against were Council Members Jan Dolan and Earl Oppertbauer.

Only one parcel of property has been designated for RCE-1 use. That is owned by RRCS Inc, a developer which had planned to build on the property on Orchard Lake Road between 13 and 14 Mile.

The RCE-1 zoning has been a controversial designation since becoming law. Monday night's action was a victory for those who have fought the ordi-

nance throughout last year's election.

Burwell, Lange and Wolf vowed to kill the ordinance if elected.

Only one incumbent supporting the RCE-1 up for re-election, Dolan, made it through the hotly contested November election.

Incumbents Keith Deacon, Cathy Jones and Joanne Smith were defeated. The advisory question against RCE-1 won with 60 percent of the vote.

But while defeating the RCE-1 zoning ordinance, the council has vowed to find a way to finance its own senior citizen housing plan.

If it will meet on Feb. 4 at 7:30 p.m. to discuss how to develop the city-owned property at Freedom and Drake into senior housing. The public is invited.

Last-minute pleas were made by RCE-1 supporters who said that without the zoning designation affordable senior housing couldn't be built in Farmington Hills.

"This is not the time to take away a possible vehicle (for senior housing)," said Commission on Aging Member Aldo Vagozzi.

"Especially if the present council is

sincere in meeting the needs of the people. This is no time to put another nail in the coffin of senior citizen housing," he said.

Wolf defended the council's action, saying that while the advisory vote may not be legally binding, he thought it to be morally binding.

"I have heard more excuses of why the people's vote shouldn't count. But I'm going to follow that vote. I have to," he said.

Before January, the previous council withdrew a senior housing plan from

the boards which would have been built on the Freedom and Drake site. It would have been funded through bonds sold by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. An advisory also had gone against that plan.

Jay Eldredge of RRCS told the council it was making a mistake in rescinding RCE-1.

"This will terminate the chance of senior citizen housing in Farmington Hills for the foreseeable future," he said. "As a planner and builder I am flabbergasted."

## Advisory vote honored: Tax builder abandoned

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

A proposal which advocates say would increase the city's tax base has been rejected by the Farmington Hills City Council.

The zoning ordinance would have allowed 60-foot buildings to be constructed for industrial, commercial and office development.

In an advisory ballot question last November, voters rejected (IRO) by a 56 percent vote.

Newly elected Council Members Jack Burwell, William Lange and Donn Wolf all had campaigned against the adoption of that zoning designation.

Joining in that opposition were Mayor Joann Soronen and Councilman Joe Alkateeb.

The ordinance was recommended for adoption by the Industrial and Economic Development Corp. which has spent nearly three years studying the city's growth potential.

The corporation has been established by the city to bring new business to Farmington Hills.

In its stead, the council amended the

ordinance which limited the structures to 50 feet. Only Council Member Jan Dolan voted against introduction of the amended ordinance.

Councilman Earl Oppertbauer, who supported the IRO 60 foot height, joined his colleagues in passing the amended ordinance.

"YOU'VE GOT to have something," Oppertbauer remarked, expressing displeasure over the defeat of the 60-foot proposal.

Proponents of the 60 foot height say the reduction will take the guts out of the ordinance and defeat its intended purpose.

IEDC Chairman Robert McConnell said he was disappointed over the council action.

The height requirement defeat, he said, will take Farmington Hills out of competition with surrounding municipalities attempting to attract new business and industry.

"Now, in particular, is our competition," said McConnell. That city has a height restriction of 65 feet, a 90-foot restriction and neighboring Southfield is without a height restriction.

The 60-foot IRO, said McConnell, is an attempt to take the burden of taxes off residents.

"The question before us was how do we intensify our revenue sources. The simple answer was to encourage a research park endeavor. The recommendation was capital intensive type building," he said.

Potential tenants, said McConnell, look for the most economical deal when looking to relocate. The higher the building, the more money they can save on construction, he said.

The IEDC study shows that the city actually loses on each acre of single-family residential property taxed \$51 an acre.

But it makes money on multiples, office, commercial and industrial. The highest is office at \$465 an acre. Commercial is \$447 and industrial is \$277.

At the present level when totally developed, the city would lose \$131 on single family for each acre but would make \$292 of each acre developed for office use.

Multiple family would bring in \$243, commercial \$486 and industrial \$344 an acre.

Proponents contend that if Farmington Hills isn't competitive, the burden will fall on the homeowner through higher taxes or cut in services in future years.

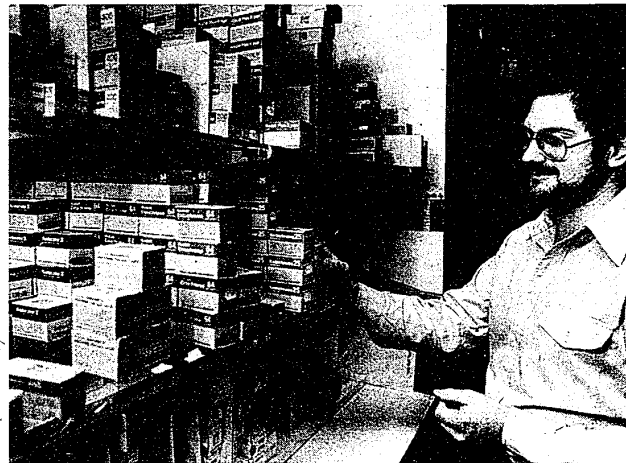
But opponents were unconvinced by McConnell's statistics.

"The problem is with the height," said Wolf. "There may be a tendency to go above the 60 feet. We have to look at the vote of 56 percent. We can't write the off as uneducated voters," he said referring to the advisory question.

Wolf noted that at a previous meeting another IEDC member had said a 50-foot limitation wouldn't be a problem.

Alkateeb suggested that the city try a 50-foot limitation for a few years to see what happens.

Burwell backed up Alkateeb's suggestion, saying he didn't want Farmington Hills to be another Southfield.



Mark Sklar, of The Negative Outlook camera shop, examines his stock of film. A rush is on by film buffs to buy up film before its price climbs. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Silver's as good as gold and becoming just as costly

By MARY GNIEWEK

Still lamenting about not investing in gold? Add silver to that list.

That priceless gem which dimes were made of jumped from \$5.98 an ounce last January to \$42.50 an ounce this month.

One of the groups sure to suffer most from the silver skyrocket is amateur photographers. Silver, used in the photographic printing process, is expected

to account for as much as a 75 percent hike in the cost of film.

The word from one local camera store owner is to stock up on film before Jan. 25.

"Buy a 20-roll pack and freeze it. It'll last forever," said Mark Sklar, owner of The Negative Outlook in downtown Farmington.

Sklar is a man who practices what he preaches. He was on his way to the bank Monday to get a loan so that he can stock up an extra supply of film before the 25th.

"That's the date Kodak, the largest film manufacturer in the nation, will put its latest price hike into practice. And once current stocks are used up, the new higher prices will be passed down to the film buyer.

Hobby picture-takers will find they're spending a lot more money for those candid shots. The Negative Outlook has already raised the price of wedding albums by \$25.

"WE RECEIVED a mail-gram from Kodak, which isn't like a candy-gram," Sklar said.

It shows 110 film up 15 percent; 35 mm and 126-film up 20 percent; wedding and commercial 120 film up 25 percent. Black and white film will

experience a greater rate hike percentage-wise than color.

Black and white 126 and 35 mm film is up 30 percent. Some types of professional film are up 35 percent or more.

Even instant (self-developing) film is up 10 percent and movie film, 25 percent. Four-by-five sheet film, used by professionals is up 45 percent. Photofinish black and white paper is up 50 percent.

Peter Nalewajk, assistant general counsel for Fotomat Corp. predicts foreign film manufacturers like Fuji and Konishiroku will soon raise their prices.

"When existing stocks move, the price will go up," he said. "It's going to be passed on somewhere down the line."

Jerry Jakacki, owner of The Focal Point studio in downtown Farmington, believes silver will eventually be replaced in the photographic process.

"The film and paper has the silver content," he said. "There is a way of extracting silver from the process. I believe eventually silver will be replaced. With inflation, everything keeps going up in price, but silver is not replaceable."



### Plying his craft

Scott Smith has found great pleasure in the craft of basketweaving. To see how he teaches others this age-old skill, turn to Page 3A. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Scherrer pleads guilty to selling phony bonds

Farmington Hills attorney P. Scott Scherrer will be sentenced Friday, Feb. 15 at 8:30 a.m. after pleading guilty to 16 felonies before Oakland County Circuit Judge George LaPlata last week.

Scherrer, free on \$50,000 personal bond, was arrested March 15, 1979 on six counts of printing and selling false bonds and taking money under false pretenses.

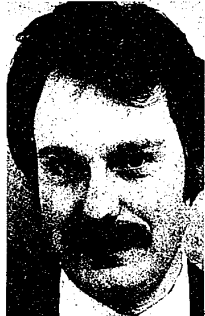
Several more counts were added to the scheme, which was investigated by a Farmington Hills special police detective squad, the Michigan State Police and the Department of Commerce.

Scherrer pleaded guilty to five counts of uttering and publishing false bonds, six counts of embezzlement, three of obtaining money under false pretenses, one of acting as an unlicensed broker, and one count of fraudulent action in a sale.

The maximum sentence Scherrer could receive would be 14 years in prison, according to Oakland County special prosecutor Michael Izzo. The minimum would be probation.

"Since they were all committed during one period of time, the sentences would be served concurrently," Izzo explained.

Scherrer declared bankruptcy last



P. SCOTT SCHERRER

year after the massive police probe into his business activities. On March 29, 1979, four counts of embezzlement were added to the six original charges.

Forty additional warrants were added related to fraudulent land and bond deals. The total scheme involved 80 alleged victims and \$3 million.

### inside

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