

# Farmington Observer

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## Housing opposition forces organize to thwart project

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

Opposition to the proposed senior citizen low income housing project slated to be built on the corner of Freedom and Drake roads is gaining support as weeks pass.

Residents in both Farmington and Farmington Hills are gathering forces in attempts to quash the project which would be supported through bonds levied by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

While Farmington residents from that city's west end have been meeting with their city officials, Farmington Hills residents have organized a petition campaign seeking the program's termination. The petition will be presented to the Hills' legislative body at

the April 23 meeting, according to Julian Hovanessian, president of the newly formed Freedom, Beechwood, Hill Homeowners Association. The proposed project would be built on an 11-acre parcel which borders the city of Farmington. It would be a combination senior citizen mid-rise, from six to eight stories, and low-rise housing for persons in the low and medium income brackets.

Residents oppose both the mid-rise and low income aspect of the project, saying that such a project would be out of character with the area.

City of Farmington residents presented a letter to their legislative body this past Monday listing six courses of action those homeowners feel should be taken to stop the project.

That council was slated to meet with

these homeowners last night to reply to the six point program. (Results of that meeting will be in Monday's Observer).

Presenting the letter were representatives from five subdivisions: Chatham Hills, Drake Heights, Heritage Village, Woodcroft and Tall Pines.

The actions listed were:

- A letter to be sent to the City of Farmington Hills, stating the Council's opposition to the proposed site development.
- The city manager to apply MSHDA requirements to the proposed site to note all variances needed to allow the project to be built as proposed. In addition, a request that the city manager study means that could be used to overcome the site's non-conformity of the MSHDA requirements.
- A letter by the council to MSHDA specifying all the areas the proposed project is in non-conformity to MSHDA requirements, and the general opposition by the Council to the project as proposed.

• The city attorney be instructed to seek avenues to stop the project, or to alter the plans to low profile senior housing only.

• A pledge of non-cooperation with the City of Farmington Hills in overcoming variances or site development, such as sewer hook-up, and utility utilization.

• A detailed investigation into the probable effects that could reasonably be expected on our city services in the event the site be unaltered from the Hills plans, keeping in mind the mutual aid pact with the Hills in these service areas.

Farmington Mayor Dick Tupper wanted the homeowners that he was opposed to the city becoming involved in any court action against Farmington Hills in attempts to stop the project. "We share services with Farmington

Hills such as the courts, recreation and youth guidance. The programs we have worked on together have been successful. I don't want to ruin the compatibility we have with them," he said.

While Farmington residents asked the council for its support, Councilman Ralph Yoder said that the only issue on which he would even consider opposing it is on the height of the building. "My conscience won't let me oppose it on any other issue," he said.

Some residents have expressed concern over the type of persons which would live in a low income housing project.

Farmington City Manager Bob Deadman said the low income portion of such projects have historically been built with one and two bedroom units. The one-bedroom units usually are occupied by senior citizens and the two-bedroom units with single mothers with children.

Farmington Hills residents opposed to the project feel that the community was given insufficient time to express their opinions about the MSHDA plan on that site.

The MSHDA plan was adopted on Feb. 26 after the Farmington Hills City Council abandoned a plan to place a city bonding question on the ballot to finance a senior citizen project. The city bonding plan was dropped after council found rents would be more than \$300 a month for the elderly.

The Freedom group, labeling itself the Citizens for More Responsive Government (CMRG), also says that the Hills council, by building a mid-rise structure, is turning its back on the RCE-1 referendum question to be on this November's ballot.

That advisory question will ask residents whether they approve of the present ordinance which allows the construction of senior citizen housing to a 60 foot height.



*A spring visitor*

No sooner did the spring sun peak its head out of the clouds than this rare visitor, obviously a wise owl, took a rest on one of Farmington's utility poles. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

## Ross campaigning for modification in sunset rulings

By MARY GNIEWEK

A state senate committee studying legislation designed to trim bureaucracy in state government will decide this week if it will adopt amendments to the bill offered by State Senator Doug Ross, D-Oak Park.

Senate Bill 75, referred to as the sunset law, is designed to provide the legislature with a standard evaluation process to review all state programs, departments, bureaus and agencies to determine usefulness.

It's the result of two years of study in joint committee session headed by State Senator Gary Corbin (D-Clio) and State Representative Joseph Forbes (D-Oak Park). The full senate is expected to vote on the bill next week.

"The thrust of the amendments is to give the sunset bill some teeth so that if we conduct a good evaluation of programs, we'll be able to bring a decision to the full legislature," Ross said.

"As it stands, it's too easy for a committee chairman to block efforts to get rid of a program. Unless it gets some teeth, I'm afraid it will be cosmetic."

Testifying before the Senate Administration and Rules Committee in Lansing, Ross proposed the bill be given enough clout to terminate departments or programs found to be ineffective.

"Sunset is a response to the reality that once government programs are created, they are beyond our reach to terminate or even modify."

"WE HAVE lacked both the process to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and the political means to force change," he said. "Unless we develop the capability to prune those programs that are not working, the budget ceding will mean there is no room to plant new programs to meet future needs."

Ross's amendments are:

- To guide the sunset review committee to establish an evaluation committee so that programs are reviewed by areas of responsibility.
- To require departments to provide assessments of how well the previous year's goals were met.
- To propose that no agency be evaluated until it has been in operation at least two years.
- To require tax expenditures be reviewed along with all state agencies. Michigan loses \$2 billion annually through various tax breaks.
- To require the evaluation model specifically take into account the impact of a program on its users.
- That users, along with the affected agency, be involved in the development of the evaluation model.
- That evaluation committee membership be open to all legislators.
- To set a one-year timetable for completion of the evaluation committee's activities.
- To require that a bill recommended in a committee report be reported to the legislature within 60 days of its introduction. The limit would assure the full legislature the opportunity to debate the changes recommended by the committee and to weigh it with an eye to the original report, Ross says.

"SOME LEGISLATIVE committees and programs have formed unholy alliances. We want to do away with the politics and make it work," said Lou



DOUG ROSS

*'The thrust of the amendments is to give the sunset bill some teeth so that if we conduct a good evaluation of programs, we'll be able to bring a decision to the full legislature.'*

— Doug Ross

Glazer, administrative aid to Ross.

"This would strengthen the review process by having the full legislature decide on recommendations — not just a special committee. Status quo has its greatest strength in standing committees."

Some legislative aids believe the present sunset bill is satisfactory.

"There was never any serious danger that it would just be a study group," said Win Rowe, administrative assistant to Fortre, "I'm not sure Senator Ross's additions are necessary but they won't hurt."

"Sunset gives us a handle on priority spending. It will tell us which departments to keep and which to get rid of — the legislature won't duck that. We're confident this will work with or without Senator Ross's amendments."

Rowe said the 60-day limit on bringing the evaluation before the full legislature "won't make any difference."

AS IT STANDS, the bill will establish a committee of six senators and six state representatives to oversee the review process. The evaluation model will try to determine public need, effectiveness and efficiency of each department. The joint committee will report back to the full legislature.

"I hope we get the whole thing passed before summer recess," said Nathan Jonker, legislative coordinator for Corbin, who sponsored the bill.

"Hopefully, this will instill some faith in government. Sometimes, there's good cause for lack of faith."

## Reject parent alternative

## Trustees stick to boundary changes

By MARY GNIEWEK

The Farmington Board of Education approved boundary changes for district high schools this week despite continued protests from residents in the Farmington High School area.

The seven-member board voted unanimously to support changes recommended by a school task force chaired by Larry Freedman, assistant superintendent of instruction for Farmington schools. An alternate plan proposed by residents of Section 26 was defeated.

The new boundaries are intended to equalize student population between

the shrinking east and growing west sections of the district. The proposed boundaries also will help the district accommodate its middle school format in 1980-81 and fit into the pattern of school closings, which have necessitated shifts.

The major objection from residents was over the new Harrison High School boundary. It will include a portion of Farmington High's boundary east of Tuck between Fen Mile and Shawwassee, Shawwassee east of Tuck, Purdue south of Nine Mile, and east of Purdue to Middlebelt.

Parents objected to the plan because

it will bus students approximately three miles to Harrison, on Twelve Mile west of Middlebelt, who are now within walking distance of Farmington High, on Shawwassee west of Orchard Lake.

North Farmington High, the third high school in the district, will not have its boundary changed. And allowances will be made for 84 students who have older brothers or sisters at the old boundary high school. Those students will have the option of attending either Farmington or Harrison.

A PRESENTATION on behalf of Section 26 residents was made by Dr. Peter Sanders. A petition signed by 35 residents opposed to the boundary change was given to the board's president, Helen Prutow.

The petition read: "This move will place undue financial burden on residents in light of the energy crisis. We think it is unfair."

"Currently, there is no provision (from the administration) for children who want to partake in extra-curricular activities," Sanders said. "Either they won't be able to partake, or they'll have to walk three miles along Middlebelt, which has no sidewalks."

"This places an unfair economic burden on a segment of the community that can least afford it."

Others complained that the boundary changes will break friendships by splitting students who've attended school together since the elementary level.

"Our children don't have anything in common with kids at Harrison," one mother told the board.

Sanders' plan would have split sections 26 and 35 in half and transferred more than 500 students. Sanders and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Scott, as representatives of Section 26, met with school administrators and board members last week to discuss boundary alternatives.

THE ADOPTED PLAN will transfer 397 students from Farmington to Harrison so that all three high schools will be near optimum capacity. Without the changes, Farmington's enrollment would exceed its maximum capacity.

"I believe your attempts are sincere," board treasurer Dick Wallace told Sanders. "But we are forced to make a change. I'm afraid if we try out nine different proposals, we'll have opposition from nine different groups."

The new plan will begin in September when incoming 10th graders will be sent to their new high schools.

All boundary changes will be complete in 1980-81. The board will vote on boundary changes for middle schools and elementary schools later this spring.

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