

Farmington Hills council, zoning board meet this week

FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
 3155 Eleven Mile
 7:30 p.m. April 14
Unfinished Business
 • Consideration of approval of bonding resolution 7 for S-107, Birchhill Roads

New Business

• Consideration of acceptance of petitions from Glen Oaks Subdivision in the barricading of Bond, Firwood and Ravine at the alleys separating the subdivisions in the business area bordering Orchard Lake Road.

• Consideration of establishing a special assessment district for water improvement on Watt and Greyfield (residential)
 • Consideration of application from Our Lady of Mercy to have a carnival May 2 to May 4 at 29300 11 Mile.

• Consideration of request from Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion to have a Memorial Day Parade, May 26.

City Manager's Report

• Recommendation to prohibit right turns on red traffic signal from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 10 Mile and Middlebelt on school days.

• Recommendation of approval of no parking restrictions on Glen Creek Drive, Old Colony Subdivision.

• Consideration of holding closed executive session to discuss matters related to employee contract negotiations.

• Recommendation for ratification of agreement with Local 214 of Team-

sters state, county and municipal workers union representing supervisory employees.

FARMINGTON HILLS BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
 3155 11 Mile
 8 p.m., April 15

New Business

• Special hearing considering the waiver of acceleration, deceleration and passing lanes in a B-2 zone at the northwest corner of Orchard Lake Road and Bond. Proponent: Bill Kuhnmeusch for Taco Bell.

Unfinished Business

• Consideration of additional approval to allow a temporary structure (mobile office trailer) in a B-3 zone to remain for an additional six months. Pro-

ponent: Michigan National Bank of Farmington.

• Consideration of 10-foot variance to the 60 foot lot width requirement and a 2,925-square-foot variance to the 8,500-square-foot lot size requirement to build a house in a RA-4 zone. Proponent: Barbara Marcus.

• Consideration of a 7.5-foot variance to the 60-foot lot width requirement and a 2,935-square-foot variance to the 8,500-square-foot requirement to build a house in a RA-4 zone. Proponent: Barbara Marcus.

• Consideration of waiver of the foundation requirements (42-inch footings) for the four-foot high screening wall in an OS-1 zone. Proponent: Robert J. Schmier for Franklin Knolls Office Center.

Critics eye court agency

(Continued from Page 1A)

trast, Wayne County has an estimated population of 2.6 million. Population estimates were supplied by county Friends of the Court to the Michigan Women's Commission.

Both agencies complain that lack of funding prevents them from doing a better job. Wayne County's Friend of the Court currently has 44 vacancies in a staff of more than 300 because of the county's budget freeze. But critics argue that no amount of money could humanize a basically archaic system: "They herd people through like sheep."

"You're treated like a criminal." "All the Friend of the Court cares about is whether I pay the child support. They could care less that my ex-wife won't let me see my children."

The complaints are common. Equal Rights for Fathers, based in Southfield and drawing from as far away as St. Clair County, now attracts 150-170 members at monthly meetings, according to Alan Lebow. Many of those are new faces coming in with the same sad story, he said.

"When I first went through it (divorce), I had the feeling that I was the only guy in the world that was causing a problem. They (Friend of the Court) tried to make me feel like I was out of step," Lebow said.

"What we've found out is that they mistreat everybody. Once we started comparing notes, we got very angry." "Not enforcing visitation is the fathers' major complaint, Lebow said. While child support payments are vigorously pursued by the Friend of the Court, fathers need to pay an attorney to simply attempt to get visitation enforced.

SURPRISINGLY, John Houghten, Oakland County Friend of the Court, agreed.

"The problems are not identical. One (child support) is of a mechanical nature with certainty, the other is shot full of holes and uncertainty."

"In my opinion, I don't think judges want to use court time for a ping-pong game. There's 150,000 excuses she (the custodial mother) can concoct."

"On the other hand, if it's outright blatant violation of visitation, we will attempt something." That something involves a meeting between an investigator and the complaining father, a meeting between the investigator and the mother, and finally a three-way meeting in hopes of reconciling the situation. If the parents come to an agreement, a consent order can be entered into court.

But most of the time, Houghten said, if the situation is that tense, it's nearly impossible to resolve.

While legally both custodial and non-custodial parents can go to jail if they're in contempt of court (not following the decree), Houghten was unaware of a single case in which a mother was jailed for refusing visitation.

Lebow and Houghten agreed on another aspect of the situation: The child is the loser.

"WE HAVE grownups so concerned about their own feelings, they're destroying children," Houghten said.

"The reality is that children need the relationship with both parents," Lebow said. "Children are used as agents of blackmail and extortion by the custodial mother. The minute the mother injects the idea that 'Your father isn't paying for you,' that mother is hurting the child."

"We're producing a lot of alienated, unloved, emotionally disturbed people."

A custodial mother agreed. "I've never denied him (her ex-husband) visitation because he's late (on support). That wouldn't be right. He's her father."

"I don't think you should ever use kids to get back at their dad," said another mother.

But she added that not all of her divorced friends share her opinion. Some urged her to deny visitation when her ex-husband hadn't paid child support.

"One custodial mother wrote to this newspaper that 'Ex-fathers don't have rights.' That opinion is not shared by the Friend of the Court."

"FATHERS have come a long way," said Clayton Christenson, Wayne County Friend of the Court.

"They're showing more interest in their children."

But he said "lack of personnel" prevents his agency from doing "the job we'd like to do."

Family counseling may be an answer, he said, and if there's an indication that counseling may help, Wayne County staffers will refer the parents to a local agency.

"But this all costs money — taxpayers' money."

Christenson and Houghten are convinced that reconciling warring par-

ents to the needs of their children is a nearly impossible task. They both believe the majority of ex-spouses attempt to put their children above personal problems.

But those who cannot communicate end up trying to get help from the "arm of the judiciary" designed to enforce the divorce decrees. As the divorce statistics mount, the problems increase. Long waits, refusal to handle questions over the telephone, paying an attorney — are a few of the complaints of divorced parents.

"Friend of the Court is totally self-serving," Lebow said. "Attorneys have made a billion-dollar industry out of divorce."

"We have no-fault divorce; but we have fault in every case where custody is awarded to one parent."

THURSDAY: Sexism, inefficiency, "not caring." Critics level their charges.

Franklin hosts tennis tourney

The 1980 Converse Classic tennis tournament will be held April 23-27 at the Franklin Racquet Club in Southfield.

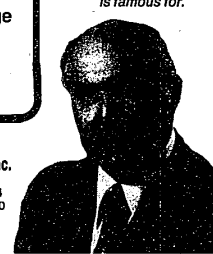
The Converse Classic is a major prize money circuit for the local player. It will be played in 21 separate cities across the United States.

The Franklin Racquet Club is at 29350 Northwestern Highway in Southfield.


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