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City offered Warner mansion for museum

By MARY GNIEWEK

Farmington could acquire a permanent site for a historical museum and cultural center in one of its most famous landmarks before Christmas.

Owners of the Warner mansion, which is valued at more than \$200,000, have offered to donate it to Farmington. The only stipulation is that the city purchase two narrow adjoining lots on the far east side of the property for \$30,000 and make use of the mansion for the public.

"Everybody that has driven Grand River has considered the mansion the centerpiece of our community for the last century," said Margaret F. Walker, Farmington Historic Commission chairwoman.

"Its acquisition would serve as a Christmas gift to the community."

Mrs. Walker presented the Farmington City Council with a feasibility study Monday on the building's adaptability for commercial use. The seven members of the historical commission unanimously favor acquisition.

The council has scheduled a hearing on Monday, Dec. 15 at city hall for public response to the proposal.

"We want community input as to whether the city should accept the gift from the Slocum family, descendants of Gov. Warner, for long-term use of the facility," said Robert Deadman, city manager.

home, at 33805 Grand River in the center of Farmington's historic district, was built in 1857.

It was the family home of Fred M. Warner, Michigan's first three-term governor, who ruled state politics during what is known as the Progressive Era. He was elected in 1904, 1906 and 1908.

Warner's daughter, Edessa Slocum, lived in the mansion until last year. She died on Aug. 30. Her children, William Slocum Jr. and Susan Klingbeil, now own the property.

"I'm most impressed with the effort and detail of the city, in particular with the historical commission (study)," Slocum said.

He reserved comment on the acquisition until further action by the city.

Commission plans include developing a combination of permanent and rotating exhibits, rooms furnished in period furniture from 1850 onward, and archives that would cover Farmington's growth from a primitive woodsy settlement to the early 20th century.

"We hope it will give us all a better idea of how our Farmington ancestors lived their daily lives," Mrs. Walker said.

"We in the present generation have a responsibility to preserve the past for future generations."

The historical commission would oversee daily operations.

"It will take some months to develop it along the lines of our proposal," Mrs. Walker said.

THE FIRST FLOOR of the house has two parlors, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, pantry, bathroom, storage shed and screened rear porch.

Front and rear stairways lead to the upper level, which has four bedrooms, maid's room, linen closet, full bath, and a stairway to the cupola and attic.

The property also includes a two-story carriage house which has a portion of an original stable.

The house is an example of Victorian Italianate architecture, popular during the Civil War era. Original features include glass panes, ornamental brick chimneys, window lintels and scalloped roof brackets.

Members of the Warner family have indicated that some original furnishings might be left with the mansion or returned for museum purposes.

Other furnishings now in custody of the Michigan State Historical Museum might be recalled for placement in the home. They include artifacts and documents relating to Gov. Warner's public career.

The Farmington Historical Society has been storing donations of furnishings and artifacts that would also be available for the museum.

The museum would be open to the public at least two days a week, with a variety of ongoing programs scheduled at other times. Guided tours would be available.

THE MANSION WOULD also serve



The Warner Mansion in the heart of Farmington's historical district is being offered as a gift to the city.

as official residence for city receptions and museum functions.

A museum library would include non-circulating materials and a special Warner collection. The library also would have books, periodicals, newspapers, documents, maps, photographs, journals, official records, archives of

local churches, schools, businesses and organizations.

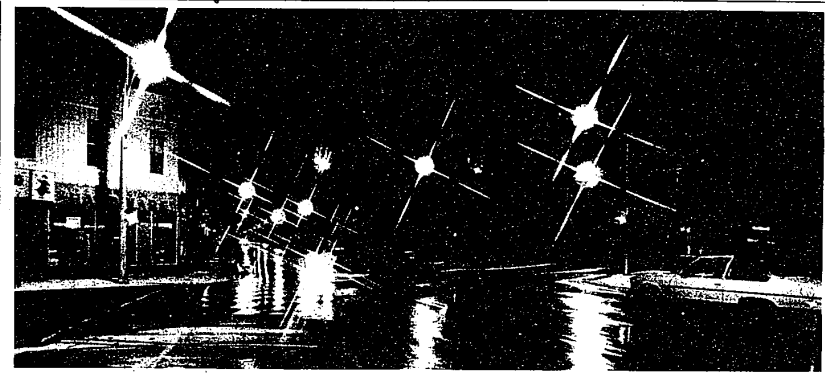
An alcove under a kitchen stairway would provide space for a compact gift shop, which could be stocked with historical publications, craft items, souvenirs and gifts.

Mrs. Klingbeil has proposed a children's garden to be planted, tended and

harvested by school children under the supervision of a garden auxiliary. The children's garden concept was popular a century ago.

There would also be a memorial garden in memory of Mrs. Slocum, who was a charter member of the Farmington Garden Club.

THE TWO-STORY Civil War era



All that glitters

It looked like the stars fell out of the sky and hovered low over downtown Farmington Tuesday night. Heavy rain followed by freez-

ing temperatures left a slick coat of ice over the streets. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

DPW armed with salt to do winter battle

Farmington's Director of Public Services Earl Billings is predicting a winter that is below average in snowfall.

His counterpart in Farmington Hills, however, is more pessimistic. "I predict a normal winter — about 30 inches of snow," said Walter Karolak, Hills' director of public works.

Billings and Karolak may be the two men in the area who are most vitally

concerned about the snowfall. Each year they are responsible for clearing it from the roads and streets in their respective cities.

Billings has 400 tons of salt at the ready for his crews to use on city streets. "It's going to be like last year, just slightly worse," he said, even as he called out his department's salt truck crews late Tuesday afternoon.

Karolak is philosophical about this winter. "You can't be lucky two years in a row," he said, referring to last year's light snowfall.

He too, is armed with between 400-450 tons of salt to begin his assault on ice and snow. Thanksgiving morning marked the first time the Hills crew was called out to salt the streets. Usually the crews are sent out when the police department reports slippery road conditions.

LAST YEAR, the Hills crews used about 30 percent of their salt supply. In Farmington, only about one-half of the normal amount of salt, or about 600 tons, was used.

The Hills has 12 DPW employees who use three graders, five five-yard trucks and three 10-yard trucks to clean the roads.

Farmington's department is divided with four employees working in the water and sewer division and seven in the public works section. They have three five-yard trucks, three pick-up trucks, one tractor and one snow plow at their disposal. Each of the trucks comes equipped with a snow plow.

Both departments use road conditions rather than temperature as a gauge in sending out salt trucks. It takes between four to five inches of snow to call out the Hills snow plows.

In Farmington, Billings waits for two to three inches of snow before plowing. Both cities send out two employees on each salt truck. Normally, two trucks patrol the roads but if conditions necessitate additional crews and equipment are dispatched.

Both cities attend to school bus routes during the weekdays and give attention to roads with hills. But neither department clears subdivision roads as a rule.

For Billings, winter is a time of mixed feelings. As the director of a public service department, he's also responsible for the sewer system in Farmington.

"If four inches of snow stays on the ground in the winter, it's just right to insulate the water pipes," he said.

Firm to plat cemetery's lost graves

The City of Farmington has hired a Northville firm to plat and mark "lost" cemetery plots in city-owned Oakwood Cemetery, at Grand River and Gill roads.

City Manager Robert Deadman estimates that between 150 and 170 new plots will be identified and tagged. They'll be sold for \$170 each, bringing the city revenues of \$25,500.

The firm contracted to do the work, Allen Monuments, will charge the city \$2,500 to lay out lots and install corner

posts by the cemetery because land for expansion is limited.

Once the city plats another parcel of land just east of the present cemetery, burial space in city cemeteries will be at full capacity.

OAKWOOD CEMETERY was founded by the Power family, pioneer founders of Farmington. The city acquired it from a cemetery board of trustees in the 1800s.

"It's very cost effective to acquire as many grave sites as possible from the cemetery because land for expansion is limited."

— City Manager Robert Deadman

posts. The firm specializes in replating cemeteries and designing new cemeteries.

"The proposed fees are extremely reasonable," Deadman told City Council Monday.

Deadman said it's difficult to locate unused graves in the cemetery. Some graves don't have headstones. The firm will locate and mark existing graves, lots and walkways.

"Once the corner posts have been installed, city workers should be able to quickly find unused grave sites as well as those that have been used and not marked," Deadman said.

"We believe it's very cost effective to acquire as many grave sites as possi-

ble. If there were any plans or layouts of the cemetery, they've been long destroyed," Deadman said.

The city proposes to close the center driveway and plat that area as single grave sites. The driveway entrance off of Grand River has been closed for years.

Grave sites could also be acquired by closing 4-foot wide pathways which run east and west through the cemetery.

The east side of the cemetery in the middle section was never platted. It could provide burial grounds for infants and local indigents, Deadman said.

"Currently there are very few identification markers or posts to aid the department of public services in locating unused grave sites," he said.

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Oakwood Cemetery is scheduled for a replating job that will identify lost graves and tag burial sites for future sale. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)