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Alameda closing is next

By MARY GNIEWEK

Alameda Elementary School is the latest victim of Farmington's shrinking school enrollment.

Administrators recommended to the Board of Education Tuesday that the school, attended by students, be closed permanently in June.

"The continuing decline in enrollment and the effort to direct available funds towards the maintenance and improvement of a good instructional program have necessitated this plan," Lawrence Freedman, assistant superintendent, told the board.

Freedman heads a task force that recommended the closing.

If Alameda closes, it will join the ranks of seven other schools closed in as many years while Farmington's enrollment sank from a high of 16,802 to 12,071.

The school closing could save the district \$209,471 next year, mostly in staff salaries, Freedman said.

Alameda, on Power between 10 Mile and 11 Mile, is the smallest of the elementary schools. All but a dozen students are bused there.

One more bus run would be needed to accommodate the remainder of the students.

Pupil reassignment from Alameda would send students to Flanders, Kenbrook, Longacre and Wooddale elementary schools.

THE CLOSING OF Alameda would reduce the number of vacant classrooms in the district from 42 to 32, on a projected student-teacher ratio of 25-1. No plans have been scheduled yet for use of the building, which was built in (Continued on Page 4A)



Motria Hefferna, art teacher at Farmington High School, looks over a sign that will be hung in the school to welcome the hostages home.

The sign's artist is Mike Karpach, 16, a commercial art student and a junior at Farmington High. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

Welcome back

Council rejects new mall

By STEVE BARNABY

Farmington editor

A zoning battle between Farmington Hills residents and a land developer has ended in victory for the residents who fought a planned shopping center for the last 15 months.

In a 4-2 vote, the city council sided with residents in denying a zoning change which would have transformed the northwest corner of 12 Mile and Halsted from single family to office and business zoning.

Voicing against the proposed zoning change were council members Jan Dolan, William Lange, Earl Oppertbauer and Joann Soronen.

Voicing in favor were council members Joe Alkateeb and Jack Burwell. Mayor Donna Wolf was absent.

A lengthy debate, with numerous presentations being made by proponents and opponents, went into the early hours of Tuesday morning before a vote was taken.

A resident delegation, led by Bernard Ludwig, protested the proposed rezoning, saying the construction of a shopping center would endanger the preservation of many of the historical sites surrounding the area.

"This is a past which deserves protecting," said Ludwig, who belongs to a group which calls itself the Historic Halsted Homeowners.

"WE'RE NOT OPPOSED to progress. But we are opposed to third rate commercial property," he said.

Among the historical sites named by the group were the Wixom-Douglas home on 12 Mile; the Robinson home on Halsted and the West Farmington Cemetery.

Homeowners also objected to construction of a shopping center, anchored by a supermarket, saying a number of surrounding shopping centers were having difficulty leasing out space because of the uncertain economic times.

Out of the 850,000 square feet of commercial property available in the surrounding area, 126,000 are presently standing vacant and 36,000 square feet have been empty for more than two years, said HHH representatives.

But developer Stuart Frankel and his representatives disagreed with the residents' gloomy economic assessment, saying the 12 Mile and Halsted intersection was ideal for the supermarket. (Continued on Page 4A)

Milliken opens the door on meetings

By MARY GNIEWEK

Gov. Milliken has vetoed two bills that would have amended the Open Meetings Act to give public officials more privacy in interviewing appli-

cants for key posts and in evaluating job performance.

Senate Bills 1143 and 1296, passed by both houses before holiday recess, were struck down by Milliken on Saturday. "These changes represent an un-

necessary step backward from open meeting legislation adopted just four years ago," Milliken said in his veto statement.

"Few decisions made by public bodies are as important as those involving selection of key administrators or evaluating performance of those individuals."

"To bar interested citizens from such discussions isolates them from the public view discussions which directly affect the quality and character of government."

SB 1143, sponsored by Sen. Richard Allen, R-Alma, would have allowed city councils, school boards and other local governmental bodies to interview applicants for key positions in private.

The companion bill, sponsored by Sen. David Flarecki, D-Deerborn Heights, would've allowed evaluation of job performance of a public employee to be held in closed session.

Both measures had the support of Farmington area representatives, Sen.

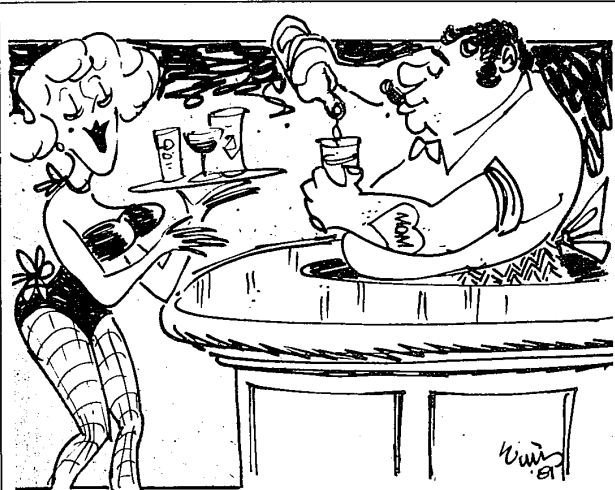
Doug Ross, D-Southfield, and Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington.

Supporters viewed Allen's bill as a way out for individuals who don't apply for top public jobs because they don't want their present employer to know they're seeking other employment.

THE BILL would have allowed a private interview at the interviewee's request, but actual deliberation by the hiring body and a final decision still would be required in public.

"I recognize it's sometimes difficult for public officials to deliberate questions concerning specific individuals and some who might be interested in public appointments may be reluctant to have their qualifications considered in open meetings and therefore may prefer not to be considered at all," Milliken said.

"It's my judgment, however, that most public bodies and people aren't (Continued on Page 4A)



Tell us your favorite barkeep

Just about anyone who regularly frequents the local pubs has a favorite bartender.

Although this dedicated gaggle of barroom philosophers, psychologists to the forum, dispensers of good cheer and conversationalists extraordinaire are well-known by their constituents, we think it's time they earned some well-deserved public recognition.

But only you, the patrons, know who is best. So we need your help in naming the "Best Bartender in Town."

The rules are simple. All you have to do is fill out the accompanying coupon. If you care to elaborate on your en-

trant's attributes, include a short essay, 25 words or less, boasting your candidate.

Mail or bring your entry into the Farmington Observer office at 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024. We're located just south of Grand River on the east side of the street.

Deadline is Feb. 4.

The winning bartender will receive a plaque appropriate for hanging above the bar, of course. The Farmington Observer will do a story highlighting the winner — pictures and all.

SOME HINTS on what to consider:

Remember, nominees may be either male or female. But they must be bartenders.

Judge them on how well they listen, how well they tell an "original" story, personality, knowing when to turn on or off the bar's television, knowing when to cut off a customer who has had one too many and knowing how to keep a confidence.

Those are just a few hints. But don't be shy. Use your imagination. We want this to be a free-wheeling and fun contest.

We're looking forward to your entries.

My nominee for Best Bartender in Town is _____

Place of work _____

I believe my nominee is the best candidate because _____

(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary)

I-696: 25 years in making

By TOM PANZENHAGEN

It just seems like the I-696 controversy has been going on forever.

In fact, the dispute over 10 miles of highway in southern Oakland County has been raging only since Ike was in the White House. Only since the Russians launched Sputnik I. Only since the Lions last won an NFL championship.

They started talking about the 23 miles of highway that would eventually link I-96 in Novi to I-94 in St. Clair Shores in 1956.

Various studies between 1956 and 1963 determined that the road should run along a corridor between 10 and 11 Mile roads.

The 1966 sale of the purchase of land along the road's right of way. The highway department called it "advance acquisition."

The western stretch of I-696 — from the I-96 interchange in Novi to Telegraph Road in Southfield — opened in 1963.

The eastern stretch of roadway — connecting I-75 in Madison Heights to I-94 in St. Clair Shores — opened in 1976.

On Jan. 15, outgoing Secretary of Transportation Neil Goldschmidt gave the middle stretch of the I-696 highway its final OK. Construction will begin as soon as possible. Completion is scheduled for 1989. Total cost will be about \$300 million.

In 1967, after years of squabbling about the exact route I-696 would take, the state Legislature passed a bill empowering Gov. George Romney to appoint a panel of arbitrators which would determine once and for all the highway's path.

Two years later the state Supreme Court upheld the panel's authority to determine that path, and the state Highway Department said it was ready to proceed.

However, Congress also passed a law

known as the National Environmental Quality Act in 1969, and it has been that legislation which has effectively delayed construction on I-696 until now.

The environmental quality act restricted the availability of parklands and public recreational facilities for use in road development. Opponents of I-696 seized the opportunity to proclaim that I-696 construction would imperil the Detroit Zoo and Rackham Golf Course, which fell within the proposed path of the highway.

In 1970 the state Highway Department commissioned the Southfield-based city planning firm of Villacand, Lemay Associates to frame an environmental impact study of the affected area. The study was to comprise an investigation of environmental, social, economic and physical patterns of land use.

TWO YEARS LATER the study was

complete. It weighed some 15 pounds.

In the interim, price estimates on construction of the highway had jumped from \$88.8 million to \$165 million.

By November 1973, the federal government had not acted on the impact study, prompting Charles Brown of the state Highway Department to remark, "Right now the environmental protection people have the muscle."

However, Southfield traffic engineer Roger Smith believed "it was just a matter of dotting the i's and crossing the t's" before construction was begun. A February 1974 headline in the Southfield Ecocentre read: "I-696 definitely coming — and before 1980." The newspaper quoted reports that construction would begin by summer 1975 and be completed perhaps as early as 1978.

By March 1975 the opening had been moved back to 1981, and Smith said, "I- (Continued on Page 8A)

what's inside

Feeling Down in the Dumps?

An Observer & Eccentric want ad can brighten your day. Those articles taking up valuable storage space around the house are a source of easy income. Donna DeWitt organized her household goods, called a helpful O & E advertiser, and reaped the rewards of her work. We'll help you too with a sure-fire selling message. Remember, one call does it all.

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