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Group homes challenged by home rule coalition

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Last month's arson arrest of a man who applied for a license to become the supervisor of a group home for the retarded left some Farmington Hills homeowners feeling vindicated about their stance against placing the retarded in residential settings.

One of those residents, Mrs. Lucy McRae, has petitioned City Council to establish a meeting in council chambers with state mental health officials at 7:30 a.m. Monday, June 22.

single-family homes.

As long as those deed restrictions don't discriminate on the basis of a person's race, creed, sex or nationality, Mrs. McRae says, "people have a right to choose what kind of neighbor they want in their neighborhood."

And Mrs. McRae says severely retarded persons, as well as the mentally ill, or persons with alcohol, drug or criminal problems, don't belong in a residential neighborhood.

Mrs. McRae says the retarded could be placed in homes or apartment units in areas zoned for multiple dwellings, such as apartments or condominiums. Ideally, she said, the state could develop 10-acre plots containing eight to 10 units to house the retarded or the mentally ill.

"I SAY the state — which has hundreds of acres of land — could set aside, say, 10 acres for group cottages or group homes in a little subdivision or cul-de-sac setting," Mrs. McRae said.

"They could be zoned multiple. This way they could have it in a different section, in a different subdivision. . . . The state could staff it. It would be good for the state, good for the families and good for the retarded."

"That idea sounded like a good one — 'in the 19th Century,'" countered John Torrone, public affairs director at the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center (MORC) for the retarded. Institutions such as the Plymouth State Home and the Oakdale Center in Lapeer, which attempted to recreate a village with numerous cottages and central schools,

stores, a church and a hospital, failed to help integrate the retarded in normal society, Torrone said, because behavior was reinforced by example.

Most group homes operating in Michigan are owned by private investors and run by non-profit corporations with state funds. Mrs. McRae says the rent the state pays to investors and the corporations is excessive, citing as example the \$2,100 monthly rent paid on a group home in Grosse Pointe.

MORC OFFICIALS say the average rent paid for group homes is \$1,100 per month. The intent of group homes is to house the retarded in their hometowns. Therefore, since it costs more for normal homeowners to live in Grosse Pointe, it will cost more to house the retarded in that community and less if

the resident is from Detroit and placed there, Torrone says.

State Sen. Donald Bishop, R-Rochester, sponsored legislation which has put a 60-day moratorium on funding for group homes which offer more than a 12 percent rate of return on the initial investment. The legislation went into effect April 15. MORC officials say seven group homes which were scheduled to open since that date have been stopped because the financial risk is too great for investors.

"The way the law is written right now investors would have to take a \$100 to \$200 loss per month," says Tom Miller, MORC's director of community service. "It's just blowing us right out of the water. Ten percent of the appropriated value of \$50,000 home is \$5,000 available for annual rent (approx-

mately \$666 per month)," he said.

It's unfair for homeowners to compare the cost of their mortgage — often negotiated years before at substantially lower interest rates — with the residential homes for the retarded, Miller maintains.

Mrs. McRae responds by saying "this business of non-profit is a joke — group homes are run by corporations at a profit."

"The retarded and the mentally ill aren't the only ones with rights," Mrs. McRae says. "The taxpayers never said the retarded deserve excellence. They said they wanted something adequate for the retarded. Who can afford excellence these days when property taxes have doubled in the last 10 years? I'd like to live in Grosse Pointe, too, but I can't afford it."

Crosby guilty in Reif murder

An Oakland County jury has found one man guilty of the June 16, 1980, murder of Farmington Hills gas station owner Pineus "Pete" Reif.

On May 1, a jury in Oakland Circuit Judge Robert E. Webster's court found Detroit Herbert Crosby, 26, guilty of first-degree murder and possessing a firearm in commission of a felony. He faces sentencing on the charges June 4 in Webster's court.

A second suspect, Daryl D. McMillion, 23, of Detroit, faces trial on charges of first-degree murder, felonious assault and possessing a firearm while committing a felony. A preliminary exam was scheduled yesterday on the charges in circuit court but the trial date has not yet been set.

According to court testimony, Crosby held the gun that fired two shots which hit Reif in the head and thigh during an attempt to steal his white 1973 Cadillac. Crosby and a female companion asked Reif for a test drive. The woman, Adrian Fleming, 18, of Detroit, testified as chief witness for the prosecution and was charged with larceny over \$1,000.

In pre-trial testimony, Miss Fleming said she and Crosby went with Reif to steal his car during the test drive while McMillion waited for them at a hamburger stand. When Crosby asked for a cigarette, Miss Fleming said, it was arranged signal to pass him the purse which contained McMillion's loaded handgun.

She announced a stickup and told Reif he'd be killed if he didn't cooperate. As she was going through Reif's

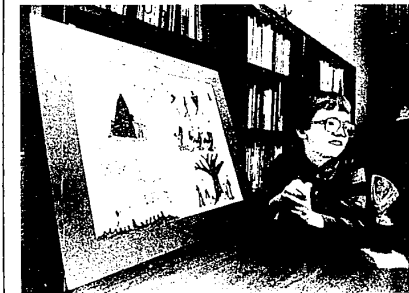
pockets, she said, the gun went off, hitting Reif in the thigh. When Reif put up a struggle, she said, he was shot again, this time in the back of the head.

McMillion and Crosby were released by Judge Webster March 5 on grounds that the prosecution had failed to bring them to trial within 180 days of their arrest. The action enraged Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson and Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols who feared that the two would flee to avoid prosecution.

Both Crosby and McMillion were initially charged with first-degree murder on grounds that they committed the alleged felonies while engaged in a plot to commit another felony — car theft. The state Supreme Court last November ruled unanimously that the court must show malice aforethought, not just evidence of two felonies, to charge someone with first-degree, or premeditated, murder.

AFTER THE cases were sent back to district court both men were again charged with first-degree murder. Crosby's attorney was Gary Ladue. McMillion, who is an escapee from the Southern Michigan Prison in Jackson, is being represented by attorney William Waterman.

Waterman has said his client only intended to steal Reif's car and stresses the fact that Crosby did the shooting. It is the prosecution's contention that McMillion gave Crosby a loaded gun to steal the car and didn't care if Reif had to be killed to accomplish the deed.



Reflections of . . .

Art, music and literature created by young minds reaped a harvest of local winners in the 1981 State Reflections Contest sponsored by the Parent Teachers Association. These four artists were cited among the 717 entries across Michigan. Clockwise from upper left: Kristin

Ann Urevig, Longacre School; Caroline Semerjian (standing), Longacre; Yolanda Wu, Kenbrook School, and Tom Bonner, Longacre. The three girls were selected for their musical compositions. Tom was cited for his artwork.

RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Man of many hats to leave schools

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Jim Nuttall's co-workers, past and present, will gather at the Farmington Community Center June 8 to toast the man retiring after 31 years service to education.

Nuttall, 56, has spent the last 23 years with the Farmington Public Schools.

When Nuttall joined the school district as a fifth-grade teacher at Kenbrook School, he already had eight years of teaching experience in Port Huron schools.

"I loved every minute in Farmington," he said. "The abundance of material fascinated me. Farmington has always done that."

He'll retire June 19, the last day of school, as reading department chairman and district coordinator for testing and for gifted programming.

Staff members said the gifted program, which offers bright students academic enrichment, matured with his input.

Nuttall was also responsible each year for coordinating state assessment test scores. The standard exam is given each year to fourth-, seventh- and 10th-grade students. His annual reports were presented each year to the school board.

Prior to his current position, Nuttall was a reading consultant. His duties varied with the year of

Levis Schulman, school superintendent.

"Because of his varied background, he brought to the job many experiences which we took advantage of," added Graham Lewis, assistant superintendent and Nuttall's supervisor.

"It's going to be hard to find anyone to replace him."

Nuttall, who lives in Farmington Hills, plans to pursue various interests after retirement.

"I used to teach piano," he said. "I may go back to tutoring. I also like to garden."

"I'll have lots of things to keep me busy."



James Nuttall

Clean sweep: thumbs down on A

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Voters in every precinct in Farmington and Farmington Hills Tuesday turned down Proposal A, legislation which sought to reduce property tax and city income tax and boost sales tax to 6 percent on every dollar.

Voters in the city of Farmington cast 2,494 no votes and 1,655 yes votes on Proposition A. In Farmington Hills the proposal was defeated by a 9,956 to 5,051 margin.

Just turnout at the polls amounted to voter under 40 percent of the electorate in Farmington Hills and 45 percent

of the registered voters in Farmington.

The proposal, which was pushed by Governor William Milliken, lost statewide by more than a 3-1 margin, countywide by a 3-1 margin. It only received the support of 30 percent of the voters in Farmington and 33 percent in Farmington Hills.

A breakdown by precincts in Farmington:

- Precinct 1 — 328-185.
- Precinct 2 — 351-161.
- Precinct 3 — 380-135.
- Precinct 4 — 348-139.
- Precinct 5 — 486-201.
- Precinct 6 — 396-148.
- Absentee — 205-96.

IN FARMINGTON HILLS the precinct breakdown went this way:

- Precinct 1 — 424-79.
- Precinct 2 — 328-84.
- Precinct 3 — 338-193.
- Precinct 4 — 279-124.
- Precinct 5 — 228-69.
- Precinct 6 — 409-132.
- Precinct 7 — 320-151.
- Precinct 8 — 309-159.
- Precinct 9 — 229-152.
- Precinct 10 — 384-328.
- Precinct 11 — 312-174.
- Precinct 12 — 277-175.
- Precinct 13 — 380-163.
- Precinct 14 — 363-146.

- Precinct 15 — 657-280.
- Precinct 16 — 227-156.
- Precinct 17 — 288-89.
- Precinct 18 — 255-129.
- Precinct 19 — 453-265.
- Precinct 20 — 567-338.
- Precinct 21 — 147-72.
- Precinct 22 — 286-97.
- Precinct 23 — 170-32.
- Precinct 24 (absentee) 491-435.
- Precinct 25 (absentee) 296-258.
- Precinct 27 (absentee) 567-352.

Farmington Hills City Clerk Nedra

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Hills man busted

Livonia police working undercover with federal agents last Thursday arrested a former Livonia businessman with \$40,000 worth of cocaine.

Gordon J. Pennell, 31, of Farmington Hills was arrested last Thursday afternoon by agents from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and members of the Livonia police undercover squad when he reportedly purchased two pounds of cocaine at the airport restaurant from City Airport on Conners in Detroit.

Police confiscated \$43,000 in cash, a 1980 Cadillac and a .38 caliber revolver Pennell was carrying.

The former owner of Pennell's Plaza Gallery, 2929 W. Six Mile, and Hospital Floral Service, 32345 Eight Mile, Pennell now owns a flower shop

in Rochester. He lives on Glouster Street in Farmington Hills.

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SUMMERFUN!

Memorial Day traditionally marks the start of summer, and the Eccentric is getting in on the act this year. Stories on how to make the most of your summer, coordinated by staffer Tom Panzenhagen, appear on Pages 3A through 9A and on the front page of the Suburban Life section.

what's inside

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