

Farmington Observer

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Moderate captures council helm

By Steve Barnaby
editor

A new era in Farmington Hills politics was ushered in this week as Fred Hughes, a first-term councilmember, was tapped as the city's next mayor. His term will begin in January. The long-time planning commission member was nominated by Councilmember Don Wolf. The nomination was symbolic of the passing of an era in Hills politics as the staunchly conservative Wolf nominated the more moderate Hughes. Wolf, Mayor Jack Burwell and Mayor Pro Tem William Lange, were elected

three years ago when conservatism was at its peak in the Hills. While both Wolf and Burwell have served as mayor, Lange breaks the conservative hold on the council leadership by opting out of next year's duties. With rare exception, the councilmember serving as mayor pro tem becomes the mayor. The mayor and mayor pro tem are elected by council colleagues rather than the city electorate.

Political observers believe that Lange and Burwell won't run for office when their terms expire next year. Even Wolf has been rumored to be thinking about stepping down. Local conservatives are feeling the

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—Fred Hughes
mayor-elect

loss of political influence coinciding with the defeat of Republican gubernatorial candidate Richard Headlee. Wolf was one of his most vocal local supporters. Named as mayor pro tem was Charles Williams, elected last year

along with Hughes. Although Williams fashions himself a conservative, he has proven to be far more the pragmatist and far less the ideologue when it comes to making council decisions.

Hughes praised the atmosphere of council during his first year and urged that it continue.

"This whole year has been characterized by cooperation. There has been a commendable display of financial management," he said as he addressed his council colleagues Monday evening.

"Besides pledging my own best effort, I hope to foster this feeling of cooperation on the council," he said.

Hughes' rise to power has been swift and somewhat surprising. Last year he beat out conservative Joe Alkateeb by 771 votes in a surprise upset.



Fred Hughes



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

The new co-owners of Cambridge drugs, Martin Zwiesler (left) and Robert Kelly, are ready to compete against the major drug store chains.

They tread where others have failed

By Craig Plechura
staff writer

They walked in where chain stores feared to tread.

The buyers of the last remaining Cunningham drugstore — located at the corner of Grand River and Mooney in Farmington — laugh nervously when they say they can succeed where a large drug chain might not. Martin Zwiesler of Northville and partner Robert Kelly of Livonia, both 38 years old, have named their business Cambridge Drugs.

The Cunningham drugstore went on the market six months ago, but most chain stores weren't interested because the shopping center, Farmington Plaza, has no large anchor store or supermarket.

But Kelly and Zwiesler think they can make a go of the 6,000-square-foot business and help the shopping center regain customers who live nearby but shop elsewhere. They're banking on it. "One big advantage over a chain drugstore is that Bob and I are here every day," says Zwiesler, who, like his partner, is a registered pharmacist. "It's so much more personal for shoppers if the people involved in the store ownership are here in the store. That way nothing gets passed on down from corporate headquarters."

As an example, Zwiesler said a customer came in to Cambridge Drugs Wednesday asking for a brand of paper underpants worn by the elderly, handicapped and persons with bowel and bladder problems.

The adult diaper wasn't stocked by Cunningham because it was a new item and doesn't sell well in all areas. Zwiesler put in a special order for Depend brand incontinence pants, and the item was on the shelves the next day.

BOTH MEN formerly worked for a chain drugstore and say such quick action would be impossible in a chain.

"A chain store manager needs authority from the corporation to order initially, and if they can't use the item in, say, 12 of its stores they can't carry it at all."

While acknowledging that chain stores have an advantage over independents in their bulk order purchasing power, Zwiesler said chains also must agree to pay the salaries of supervisors and corporate officials.

Despite declining sales in recent

months at the Farmington Cunningham store, Kelly and Zwiesler said they've had their eye on the store ever since Cunningham officials announced they would liquidate their holdings.

"The store has been here a long time," said Kelly. "We figured if Cunningham could do good we could do better."

The number of customers coming into the store daily is at its lowest point ever, according to Kelly, with 100 to 124 customers coming in each day. Ideally, he said, it is hoped that 300 to 400 persons come in each day, spending an average of \$8 per visit.

Judging from the reception of the few customers who've stopped in the store since it changed ownership, Zwiesler said the community response is encouraging.

"FARMINGTON is small-townish but still not exclusive — it's not the type of thing where if you haven't been here 25 years you aren't accepted," Zwiesler said.

The nearness of the drugstore to a number of doctor's clinics along Orchard Lake Road and Shilwaukee and Grand River was the biggest factor in the purchase decision, Kelly said. It made the store attractive even though at least three other drugstores are located within a mile of their store.

"Eight-tenths of a mile to be exact," said Kelly, noting that as competing drugstores in the Downtown Farmington Center.

The Farmington Plaza Shopping Center has had it ups and downs, but Seymour Sefting, one of the center's owners, said that predictions of an impending demise were premature. Next month, he said, every building in the strip will be leased when a dry cleaner and gift shop open.

Drugstore owners Kelly and Zwiesler won't disclose how much they paid for the store or pay to lease the structure, but the deal with Cunningham included a number of drug, beauty aids and liquor items which were part of the deal and remain on the shelves.

Kelly and Zwiesler said they have absolutely no connection with Cunningham or Apex Drugs, a firm which has taken over many of the old Cunningham stores. Like Apex, however, their store will be staffed by non-union help.

Drink policy questioned

Spat worsens over bar parking

By Craig Plechura
staff writer

Bootlegger's Bar owner Joe Ascione is feeling pressure from two sides — homeowners living around his bar and investigators from the Liquor Control Commission (LCC).

If he wasn't doing such good business lately, Ascione might be ready to toss in the bar towel.

About a dozen Farmington residents came to City Council last week complaining that the overflow of bar customers, especially on two "all-you-can-drink" nights, often park illegally in the roadway and driveways, obstructing traffic on Brookdale.

Police say cars have been ticketed and towed on several occasions. Residents are asking the council to enact a no-parking ban on both sides of the street halfway down the block from Grand River. The ban would be in effect from 9 p.m. until 6 a.m. every night, but Sunday when the bar is closed.

City Manager Robert Deadman said a petition presented to City Council showed 11 of 14 signers living on the street supported a parking restriction, but all residents living within a half block of the bar will be surveyed. If

more homeowners want the ban than oppose it, signs will be posted prohibiting parking at night. Deadman said.

"From an administrative point of view I object to spending all this time dealing with a problem we shouldn't be dealing with in the first place," said the city manager.

"The owner doesn't seem to want to deal with the parking problems or other problems very effectively. And this new policy of all-you-can-drink in an area where there is already inadequate parking makes things even more difficult for us."

ASCIONE SAID if residents are successful in barring on-street parking, problems will only increase, with tensions rising between bar patrons and nearby homeowners.

Ascione said in an effort to expand the amount of parking spaces his customers can use he made an agreement with the owner of a real estate office across the street from the bar to allow bar customers to use that lot, too. In exchange for the parking privilege, Ascione said, he has agreed to pay for snow removal at the adjacent parking lot.

With all-you-can-drink advertisements running daily on four FM radio

stations — WABX, WILZ, WMJC and WCOM — Ascione admits he often attracts more customers than the 150-car parking lot behind the bar and the overflow lot across the street can accommodate.

Some of the homeowners living around the bar claim problems are worst Tuesday nights when patrons can drink all the beer, wine or standard mix drinks they want for \$5 between 8 and 11 p.m.

Many who live around the bar claim customers make sure they get their \$5 worth on all-you-can-drink nights and leave the bar driving recklessly. Police say noise, fighting and careless driving reports are rampant outside the bar.

Clifton Hardy, district supervisor for the LCC, said a field investigator will be visiting the bar unannounced sometime soon to observe the bar, the behavior of patrons and the all-you-can-drink offer.

IT'S AGAINST the law in Michigan to serve someone an alcoholic drink at a price less than what the owner paid for the alcohol, said Hardy, and illegal to serve someone who's intoxicated.

"The wording itself [all-you-can-



Joe Ascione

drink) is against the law," Hardy said.

The wording implies customers can drink as much as they want, said the LCC officials, which isn't true.

No intoxicated persons are served at Bootlegger's Bar, Ascione maintained. During the all-you-can-drink nights, customers get only one glass and must go to the bar themselves for a refill, he said.

Sidewalk turnout disappointing

Farmington Hills residents whose homes lie within an area targeted for sidewalk installation turned out in disappointingly low numbers for an informational meeting at North Farmington High School last week.

"We sent out over 1,000 invitations, and only about 10 percent of the people affected were represented," said Thomas Bissell, director of public services.

"Everyone wishes more people would have come.

"It'll be a tough decision for the individuals who weren't there to know whether or not to sign the petitions."

Because interest and necessity appear the greatest, the square mile bordered by 12 Mile, 13 Mile, Farmington

and Orchard Lake roads was selected for the city's initial sidewalk construction.

A majority of the affected residents must sign petitions in order for the policy to be enacted.

The presentation by city officials Wednesday detailed the assessment policy, the culmination of a six-year project, that would pay for the construction of sidewalks along the city's major mile roads.

Information packets and petitions were handed out and are now available at city hall.

According to the policy, single-family residences which don't border a major

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Does Yule shopping start too early?

With merchants depending on from one-quarter to one-third of their profits from the Christmas shopping season, the decorations are going up earlier and the advertisements hitting the airwaves sooner every year.

By starting earlier, merchants are hoping they can make up for lost revenue due to the sagging economy.

But some persons object to the season starting so early, maintaining it transforms a religious holiday into a commercial venture.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HOLIDAY SHOPPING STARTING EARLY and the advertisements hitting the airwaves sooner every year? FEEL ABOUT THE EMPHASIS ON COMMERCIALISM DURING THE HOLIDAYS?

To respond to the question call us at 477-5499 until 1 p.m. on Friday. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer for how your neighbor's feel.

what's inside

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