

Farmington Observer

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Council overrules bureaucrats in sign flap

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

For homeowners in Farmington Hills' Hollywood subdivision, a celebration at Dunleavy's Pub and Grub marked the victorious end of a year-and-a-half-long struggle with city officials to get stop signs installed at subdivision intersections.

Two children have been struck by cars in the neighborhood, one of whom is now in a body cast.

At Monday's city council meeting,

residents presented petitions signed by 1,100 persons. The petitions urged council members to install eight stop signs in the subdivision.

Spokespersons for the group included Al Lanigan, principal of Larkshire Elementary. Many of the children in the subdivision attended Larkshire.

The subdivision is near Nine and 10 Mile, Orchard Lake and Middlebelt Roads.

The council's unanimous vote in favor of the homeowners signaled defeat for Farmington Hills city manager

Lawrence Savage and director of public services Thomas Blasek. Both opposed stop signs and favored yield signs. Both said they based their opposition on guidelines outlined in the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

"Our recommendations are based on... the accepted method for the determination of stop and yield sign locations," Blasek said.

Blasek pointed to a Troy study which said that "placing stop signs for speed control tends to increase peak speeds

(the study) showed an alarmingly high disobedience rate for these signs."

Lanigan said he knew of such studies and had similar information from Livonia and Oak Park.

But even if only 50 to 60 percent of the cars stop at the stop signs, the residents' objectives would have been met, he said.

Lanigan said he learned from the state highway department that "people do not have to remove their foot from the accelerator at yield signs."

"We're trying mainly to get kids to

and from school. This would afford a little more safety in getting them there," Lanigan said.

Councilman Jack Burwell said that stop signs placed where motorists least expect them cause drivers to pay less attention than they otherwise would.

Homeowners' spokesperson Herb Baliko called the stop signs a "self-imposed action." "People in our sub know the school hours," he said.

Savage said he wondered if residents would want the stop signs even if they

knew the signs might lead to more accidents in the subdivision.

"Right now, with yield signs the way they are, several times I've slammed on the brakes when I had the right of way," responded Baliko. "I'd rather have stop signs — if they hit me, they were supposed to stop."

Savage said he was upset that the city's intent was being misinterpreted.

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Garbage rules get once-over from the Hills

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

At Monday's legislative session, Farmington Hills council member Charles Williams blasted the city's refuse collection policy for excluding apartments and businesses from its trash pickup program.

Unanimously, the council voted to have city officials assist a committee formed recently by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce to study the issue.

The city currently provides trash removal to single family residences and pays for it with an ad valorem tax of all Farmington Hills property owners.

It now costs Farmington Hills more than \$800,000 annually for refuse collection from the city's 14,000 single family residences. Adding apartment pickups would increase the bill by \$200,000, said assistant city manager William Costick.

Several apartment owners, including the Bestak Co., owner of Muirwood Apartments, have sued the city. The owners are charging that the policy is discriminatory, illegal and unconstitutional. The case is scheduled for trial Tuesday before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Robert C. Anderson.

"The question involved is whether the present city policy is fair and equitable in light of the Bestak suit and inquiries that I have made regarding commercial trash pickup on behalf of the chamber of commerce," said Williams, who also is president of the local chamber.

Williams suggested that a group of

city officials appear before the chamber in the near future to report on its findings.

He estimated that one-eighth of property taxes paid by business and apartment complexes fund city garbage pickup for single family residences.

City trash collectors will pick up apartment refuse if all of the garbage from an apartment is put in one pile.

Council member Jan Dolan credited former mayor and council member Earl Oppertbauer for devising the plan which proved "less costly for households," but created "questions that never really have been resolved."

"I think we should step back since this has been brought to a head and at least give businesses and apartment owners a chance to state their case. No matter what we do, they will have been heard," said Dolan.

Councilmember Donn Wolf opposed Williams' suggestion that city officials appear before the chamber. But he said he saw "no problem in looking into it."

"Studies show we're not terribly out of whack here, but if residents are deriving direct benefit than commercial-industrial (users), then maybe that isn't fair. I have no objection to looking into how equitable this is, and making it more equitable," said council member Jack Burwell.

Mayor Fred Hughes questioned whether the council could take any action with a lawsuit pending.

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Graduate jobs looking better

Fifty-one percent of those available for work held full-time jobs nine months after their graduation, a Farmington Public Schools survey of June 1981 graduates of high school vocational programs shows.

The survey shows that 4.2 percent were unemployed and looking for work.

"I am particularly pleased with this year's unemployment rate, especially at a time when the labor market is so bleak," said Earl Baumunk, director of vocational education.

"This not only speaks well for the students but for the quality of vocational programs as well."

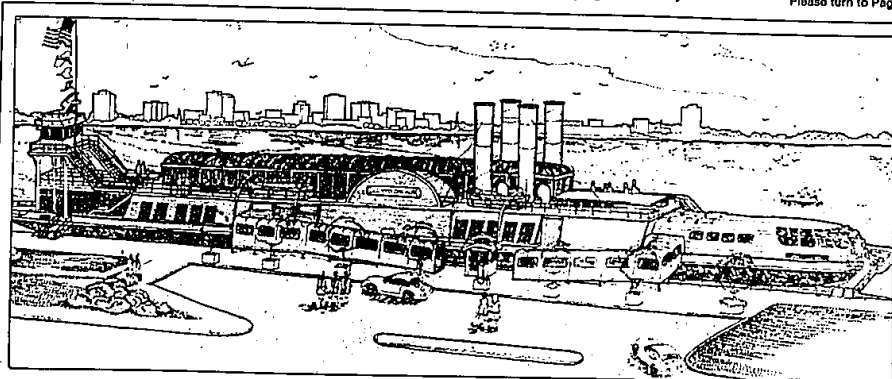
The follow-up survey, which takes

place nine months after graduation, is designed to indicate how well the program has served the graduate. Baumunk said the recent report had a response rate of 80 percent.

The survey reports there were 25 percent more students working both full and part time than in 1980. Baumunk said the figure may reflect a need for money for schooling.

Of the students who were employed in a full time, 78 percent were working in a job related to their classroom training. Sixty-four percent of those who continued their education were enrolled in related college programs.

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The Lansdowne, a floating restaurant moored permanently at the foot of Hart Plaza, will have room when it's completed to seat 1,000 customers on its upper and lower decks.

RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Eatery alive after long struggle

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

This summer when the gangplank is plopped down to mark the second christening of the Lansdowne, a planned floating restaurant, attorney Lee J. Klein will have every right to feel smug.

The longtime Farmington Hills resident has spent close to 500 hours in and out of court keeping the 99-year-old saddle wheel ferry, now moored permanently at the foot of Hart Plaza, financially afloat.

Largely because of his efforts, fun-seeking Detroiters will be able to while away the cocktail hour listening to music on the vessel's glassed-in upper deck, or descend to the lower deck for a moderately-priced or haute cuisine meal.

What makes the gridiron-sized Lansdowne special, says principal Detroit city planner Alexander Pollock, is her rich history.

Named for Marques de Lansdowne who served as Canada's fifth governor general in 1760, the railroad ferry boat was developed during the industrial revolution. It boasts one of the few existing steam reciprocating engines, noted for its single piston 48 inches in diameter, Pollock said.

FROM 1884 until the 1960s when one of its two engines exploded, the Canadian National Railroad shipped heavy freight between Windsor and Detroit on the Lansdowne.

In 1970, she was sold as surplus to the Detroit-Windsor Barge Co. and later purchased by Detroit developers Joseph Evanski and Robert Davis.

Their project went into default in 1980, and Klein was approached by creditors unable to recover nearly half a million dollars they'd invested.

He eventually collected a major por-

tion of the money and fought off a repossession effort by Detroit-Windsor Barge — which he said was still owed \$80,000 by the developers.

After Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Alice Gilbert appointed a receiver to preserve the value of the weathered and worn Lansdowne, Klein embarked on a search to find another developer.

"WE CAME TO the realization that the only likelihood the people we represented would get their money was if we found a buyer," explained Klein. Creditors included individuals as well as steel, electric and construction companies.

Donning salesmen's hats, Klein and Birmingham attorney Martin M. Docetoroff, the Lansdowne's receiver, tried to entice local restaurateurs into developing the floating eatery.

"We wanted to go to them first because they're local and experienced. But we couldn't seem to get them interested. The lack of response just amazed us," Klein said. The cost of finishing the barely-begun renovation (projected for completion in June) carries about a \$2 million price tag, estimates Pollock.

His faith in the development unshaken, Klein sought out-of-state buyers. He sensed the search was over when David Tallichet, president of Specialty Restaurants Corporation of Long Beach, Calif. and a former World War II fighter pilot, travelled to Detroit to survey the vessel.

WITH NEARLY 70 seafood restaurants across the country, many located near airports, Specialty Restaurants recorded sales exceeding \$4 million in 1981.

"I flew out to see Dave in California last January, and after talking to him for three days, I convinced him to make a bid," said Klein.

Tallichet's offer of \$392,000 — submitted on the condition that government financing be made available — was the only one received. The deal gelled with the issuance of general revenue bonds by the city of Detroit and a \$175,000 urban development grant that financed the extension of water, gas and electricity lines to the riverfront.

It's expected that 140 local jobs will be supplied by the restaurant, which will seat 1,000 customers.

Arrangements are set for the use of 500 parking spaces in nearby lots by restaurant-goers, who may opt for valet service.

"This is going to add a tremendous visual ambience to the riverfront which is one of the greatest assets we

have going for us," said Pollock. "It'll provide interesting things for people to do and preserve a little bit of Detroit and Windsor heritage."

THE LANSDOWNE will serve Canadian patrons and offer the people who come to Red Wing hockey games or Cobo Hall someplace to have dinner, he added. Cuisine will include everything from hamburgers to steak, lobster and bouillabaisse.

Pollock promises patrons the "Lansdowne decor won't be hokey."

"It was a workhorse vessel, not a pleasure ship. The restaurant is going to have a warm but very simple decor with a motif that's nautical and also reminiscent of the railroad," he said.



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Attorney Lee J. Klein has spent 500 hours in legal time keeping Detroit's planned floating restaurant, the Lansdowne, financially afloat.

oral quarrel

Give us your ideas for Festival fun

This year's Farmington Founders' Festival is hoping to have some new features along with the favorite traditional fare. But the committee would like to hear some of your ideas.

So here is your chance to help make the Festival even better than it has been in past years.

This week's Oral Quarrel question is:

WHAT NEW ACTIVITIES WOULD

YOU LIKE TO SEE AT THE FARMINGTON FOUNDERS' FESTIVAL? WHAT OLD IDEAS WOULD YOU LIKE SEEN? THROWN OUT?

You have until 1 p.m. on Friday to call 477-5498 to give your answer. You will have 30 seconds to answer the question.

Look in Monday's Farmington Observer for the answer.

what's inside

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"COULDN'T BELIEVE IT!"

"Sold the car in 1 hour!" R. Night was delighted with the response of the Observer & Eccentric "Automotive/Transportation" classified ad placed to sell a Chevrolet Caprice.

Remember... One call does it all!

591-0900
Use your MasterCard or Visa

Savings and loan gets new backers

Metropolitan Savings Association of Farmington Hills has been seized by federal regulators as insolvent and merged into one of the country's largest savings and loan associations, Empire of America, FSA (Federal Savings Association).

Depositors' accounts, along with loans and other accounts, were automatically transferred to Empire last Saturday, when the Federal Home Loan Bank Board announced the merger.

Benjamin L. Elder, now president of the Michigan Division of Empire, assured depositors they won't lose money and said Metropolitan employees will keep their jobs. He said as far as cus-

tomers are concerned, only the name will change.

The 31-year-old Metropolitan, the 10th largest savings and loan in the state, is the second Michigan savings and loan acquired by Empire in the past six months.

Empire merged with Southfield's American Federal Savings and Loan Association last August, when American Federal was Michigan's fifth largest savings institution. Empire also acquired two other savings and loans in Florida and Texas last August. It is now the fifth largest savings and loan association in the country, according to a representative.

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