

Farmington Observer

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Twenty-Five Cents

Downsizing causes stir in suburbia

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

A growing number of Farmington Hills homeowners are concerned with the recent trend toward developers building smaller houses in subdivisions of larger houses.

"It is a situation where, because of the high costs (of the larger houses), you end up with a builder who has difficulty selling a higher-priced home," said Thomas Blaseil, Farmington Hills director of public services.

"As a result, there is more and more of a market for the smaller homes."

Even though builders still are building houses that are larger than the city's minimum-size requirements, the new houses are smaller than the existing houses in subdivisions such as Foxmoor, Irv Wilcove Estates, Springbrook and Ramblewood.

causing the value of the larger houses to drop, Aman said.

FOR EXAMPLE, AMAN originally chose to live in his subdivision because the developer was building all-brick houses, he said. Now, that has changed, and the developer is allowing houses without brick to go up, Aman said.

But residents fear that the value of the smaller houses within those subdivisions will "artificially increase" because of the subdivisions in which they are located, and houses like Aman's, will drop in value.

"We're trying to insure the integrity of the various unfinished subs," Aman said.

When the Irv Wilcove residents asked the council for help in May, officials agreed to study the situation and present a report on June 13. Although officials followed through with their promise, city administrators told residents this week that more study is needed.

PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT is whether the city can, through ordinance changes, tell developers they cannot build houses that are smaller or of lower quality than the existing houses in an unfinished subdivision.

"The courts are concerned that such minimum standards (for house size) may have the effect of restricting certain classes of residents from choosing to live in a community," Blaseil said in a report to the City Council.

A preliminary review of law cases shows that it is difficult to set minimum or maximum house sizes in city

Please turn to Page 6

SEVERAL HOMEOWNERS expressed their concern at Monday's city council meeting.

"It's called downsizing," said Foxmoor subdivision homeowner John Aman in a telephone interview the next day.

The recent building of "much smaller and not as good quality homes," Aman said, is occurring in his unfinished subdivision, as well as in another 11 or 12 neighborhoods throughout the city.

Concern about this trend in the unfinished subdivisions surfaced in May when homeowners in the Irv Wilcove Estates appealed to the Farmington Hills City Council for help.

Residents are complaining that new smaller, less expensive, and what they have called lower-quality houses, are



Terror from the sky

Tornadoes, by-products of thunder storms, are the most destructive weather phenomenon known. The above tornado descended to earth from a wall cloud before being captured on film by the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This month's Science Spectrum examines thunder storms on Page B-1.

Banker wins seat on school board

Voters gave Susan C. Rennels the largest slice of a very small pie last Monday in the annual Farmington School Board election.

Rennels, a 39-year-old assistant branch manager of an area savings and loan, entered the world of elective politics by handily trouncing her five opponents to win a seat on the Farmington Board of Education.

Rennels gathered 684 votes, or 84.1 percent of the ballots cast in the district, which has approximately 40,000 voters, according to school officials.

"Not bad for her first run," said board trustee Michael Spilce, who

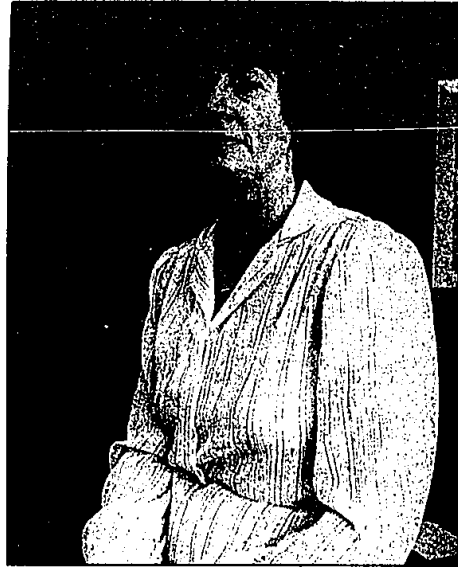
decided not to run for re-election after serving two terms on the board.

Said Rennels, a divorced mother of two, after votes from the district's four precincts had been tallied in the steamy, sultry Farmington Hills City Hall: "I'm pleased and a little overwhelmed."

"But I'm a little disappointed, too," she said of the typically low turnout for a school election. "It's really disgraceful."

"I was standing outside Middlebelt (at East Middle School, a polling place)

Please turn to Page 6



RANDY BOST/T/Staff photographer

Susan Rennels won a seat on the Farmington Board of Education by gathering 84.1 percent of the vote in last Monday's election.

Hills backs off on housing plan

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

City officials have rejected a request from the Farmington Hills Non-Profit Housing Corp. — the sponsor for auto dealer Roger Frank's proposed 900-unit senior citizen housing project — for \$140,000 to pay for site improvements.

Instead, city council members agreed to make an estimated \$73,000 commitment in 1984-85 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money to pave at least a portion of Tuck Road which would abut the proposed HUD-funded housing center that will front Nine Mile and Tuck, south of Grand River.

"It's a contingent commitment," said William Costick, assistant city manager. "It's contingent on something. The something is that if they get federal

funding (for the housing project)."

So the request by the housing corporation, the tax-exempt sponsor/mortgagee required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for the CDBG funds to pave Tuck Road is entirely contingent on whether the corporation gets HUD funds to build the housing center. Peck earlier said that the project would cost in the millions of dollars.

With a rezoning request approved, and the architectural plans and construction bids in hand, the corporation must meet the HUD 202 Program's June 30 application deadline. If approved, HUD would finance the construction of the senior center including the costs of buildings, community activity facilities, roads, parking and landscaping.

BUT THE six-member corporation

board of directors in May asked Farmington Hills City Council members for \$140,000 in CDBG funds to pay for what they called "off-site improvements." Some of those listed improvements include tap and extension of water lines, enlarging a storm water retention basin, acceleration and deceleration lanes, as well as a masonry wall and earth berm to buffer the proposed center from Peck Chevrolet.

But after talking with HUD officials, city administrators said it seems the majority of improvements the corporation has asked the city to help pay for are eligible for HUD funding.

"Because there is a way to fund these things (through HUD), we don't feel we should fund them," Costick said, indicating that what the corporation thought were "off-site improvements" actually are on-site improvements.

Please turn to Page 6

Manlaughter case trial date is set

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Jeffrey Scott Jones of Farmington Hills will stand trial before Oakland Circuit Judge Steven Andrews later this summer in a charge of manslaughter in the March traffic death of 11-year-old Jennifer Kasprovic.

Jones, 24, was bound over to circuit court after a three-day preliminary examination before 47th District Judge Margaret Schaeffer in late May, said Gary Chopp, Oakland County assistant prosecuting attorney. Jones stood mute to the charge at his arraignment before Schaeffer in March. A plea of not guilty was entered for him.

Jennifer, a fifth grader at Beechview Elementary School, was struck by a Pontiac LeMans at 7:15 p.m. March 4 as she was stepping off the curb walk-

ing toward the southeast corner of 11 Mile and Middlebelt. She was dead on arrival at Botzford General Hospital of multiple injuries.

TWO BOYS, WHO were walking with Jennifer when she was struck, testified at Jones' preliminary examination "that, in other words, they didn't cross the street until they got the walk signal," Chopp said.

An Oakland County traffic engineer also testified that the walk signal is activated only when the motorists' traffic signals have been red for 1.4 seconds, Chopp said. Another witness, a motorist who was near the intersection at the time of the accident, "said he didn't know what color the light (traffic signal) was," Chopp added.

Please turn to Page 6

Should small houses be built next door?

In an attempt to revive the home-building industry, developers are building smaller homes in subdivisions which contain larger homes. Some residents fear that this tactic will have an unfavorable impact on their property values. Several residents have complained to the Farmington Hills City Council, which is investigating. The matter was discussed at some length during the council's regular meeting Monday.

HOW DO YOU FEEL PROPERTY VALUES WILL BE AFFECTED BY DEVELOPERS BUILDING SMALLER HOUSES IN SUBDIVISIONS WHICH ALREADY HAVE LARGER, MORE EXPENSIVE HOUSES?

To answer this question, please call us at 477-4949. You will have 30 seconds to respond. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer to see how your neighbors feel about this issue.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

what's inside

- Amusements 10-13C
- Business 7-9C
- Classifieds . . . Sections D,E
- Club Circuit 4B
- Community Calendar . . . 7E
- Creative Living . . . Section E
- Crossword Puzzle 5E
- Editorials 14A
- Obituaries 2A
- Recreation News 11A
- Science Spectrum 1B
- Sports 1-6C
- Suburban Life . . . Section B

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