



Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 11

Thursday, November 17, 1983

Farmington, Michigan

72 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Hills agrees to more parks money

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Faced with losing a state land acquisition grant, Farmington Hills officials this week doubled the city's share of the \$2-million purchase price for the 211-acre Spicer property.

could not afford the city's original \$1.6-million grant request. Councilmen William Lange and Charles Williams were absent.

"It would enhance our potential for receiving the (MLTF) grant," said Mayor Fred Hughes, about the city's increased share.

BUT WHILE HIKING Farmington Hills' total share to \$800,000, council members also requested the MLTF award the city a smaller \$1.2-million

land grant to help buy the acreage north of 11 Mile and west of Farmington Road.

Although council members were quick to commit the additional \$400,000, they were equally quick to admit that a financial pinch will result.

Because the additional \$400,000 will more than likely come from the city's

capital improvement fund — money that would otherwise be used to pay for improvements such as drainage — city officials indicated that money will have to be replaced.

WHILE FOUR residents Monday voiced strong support of the city's decision to commit more money to the land's purchase, Councilwoman Jan Dolan told residents to remember that increased revenue will be needed in the future to pay for projects that may be

delayed because of the Spicer property. "Keep it in mind when the budget comes up next spring," Dolan said. "Let's not have all the negative (opinions) come in at that time. We need a few positive ones."

Farmington Hills was asked to reduce its grant request and to increase its local contribution because the city's original \$1.6-million request represented about 15 percent of the MLTF's total funds, said Edward Hagen, MLTF staff assistant.

"ALL SPONSORS HAVE been notified that the (MLTF) board is trying to spread their money around as much as possible," Hagen said. Because the MLTF expects to receive only about \$12 million for land acquisition throughout the state, Hagen said land trust officials are asking most of the 92 priority project sponsors to reduce their grant requests.

Please turn to Page 12

Plans taking shape for recreation area

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Although a detailed plan of how the 211-acre Spicer property would be used has not yet been developed, Farmington Hills staff assured state land grant officials that some activities could begin as soon as the land is purchased.

Farmington Hills officials said they have hesitated in spending time and money drafting detailed development plans because of the uncertainty of receiving a state grant to purchase the \$2-million parcel.

OWNED BY THE Spicer family since the turn of the century, the centrally-located acreage features wildlife, rolling hills and meadows, trees and a tributary of the Rouge River. Buildings on the property include a historic estate house, farm house and three barns.

Once the Spicer property is purchased, work could begin immediately on nature and cross country ski trails, a nature museum, an animal farm and maybe a jogging trail, according to the city's addendum.

When the property is purchased, city officials say they plan to form a committee of community leaders and residents representing special and diverse interests in developing the Spicer land.

NATURE TRAILS and an animal farm would be worked on in conjunction with the Farmington Public School District. A caretaker living in the farmhouse would be in charge of the animal farm.

Since the city's parks and recreation budget tops about \$800,000, Hills officials indicated in the report that the farm's estimated budget of \$75,000-\$85,000 would pose no financial burden. But city officials are planning to negotiate an agreement with the school district "that would either minimize or eliminate the city's expense in the animal farm operations."

The estate house would be used as a nature/environmental museum housing public classes, tours, displays, exhibits and photographs. Some of the exhibits could feature minerals, horticulture and wildlife common to the area.

CITY OFFICIALS HAVE also suggested the following activities for the Spicer property:

- Pioneer heritage programs featuring crafts, cooking, maple sugaring and a festival.
- A botanical garden.
- Adventure programs offering survival skills, wilderness camping and outdoor cooking.
- Outdoor education, featuring day camp activities and "winter sports programs" such as environmental education, astronomy and conservation. Jogging trails also may be included in areas that are not environmentally sensitive to this type of activity.
- Cross country skiing including lessons, a school program, and maybe special events such as a race and winter carnival.
- Snowshoeing lessons using the jogging trails. Moonlight tours may also be available.
- Tobogganing and sledding.
- Tot lot and playground.

Please turn to Page 6



RANDY BORSZTA/staff photographer

Mercy High senior Mary Costa makes no bones about it: She appreciates the Catholic school's unbending girls-only policy. "You don't have to worry about how you look or what you'll say to that certain boy. It takes a little bit of the pressure off in that way."

Dwindling tradition holds own with many

By Tom Bear staff writer

To hear Mary Costa tell it, she "had no other choice" almost four years ago when it came time to pick a high school to attend.

Her choice: Mercy High, an all-girl Catholic school at 11 Mile and Middlebelt roads in Farmington Hills.

"This was my first and only choice," said Costa, a straight-A student and a member of the softball team and the French Honor Society. When she graduates next June, she'll be the third child in her family to have earned a diploma from the school.

"YOU HAD THE attention," she said when asked to remember the good things about her stay at Mercy. "The teachers give a lot of attention to the girls. I like that. I don't want to be just a number."

And there's one aspect of life at Mer-

cy Costa said she appreciated — the unbending girls-only policy. There are exceptions — "relationships" classes with boys from other Catholic schools and dramatic efforts ("You can't put on plays without boys," Costa said) — but for the most part, Mercy's 1,100 students spend their school days without boys.

The rules are much the same at other prominent all-girl Catholic schools in the Detroit area — Ladywood, Marian, Dominican, Regina and Sacred Heart. Another all-girl school, Immaculate of Detroit, closed its doors last year.

Please turn to Page 16

oral quarrel

Give us your views on 'Day After' furor

The ABC television network will end the world next Sunday night when it airs "The Day After," a made-for-TV movie which depicts the nightmarish aftermath of a nuclear war. The end begins at 9 p.m. Sunday on Channel 7.

Controversy surrounds the much-publicized movie. Conservative columnists have called it left-wing propaganda for nuclear fear and pro-disarmament groups. ABC executives have said it is totally apolitical.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

What are your feelings about "The Day After" and the controversy it has generated?

To answer this question, call 477-5498. You have until 1 p.m. on Friday to answer this question. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

what's inside

- Amusements 10-16C
- Business 7-9C
- Classifieds Sections D-E
- Club circuit 4B
- Community calendar 3B
- Creative living 1-5E
- Crossword puzzle 7E
- Editorials 14A
- Obituaries 2A
- Recreation news 13A
- Sports 1-5C
- Suburban life 1-9B
- Travel 6C

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EARLY DEADLINES

Due to the holiday, we will be publishing on Wednesday, Nov. 23. To place your classified ad for this issue, please call Monday, Nov. 21, between 8 and 5:30 p.m.

Happy Holiday!

One call does it all!

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How one district settled problem

By Tom Bear staff writer

Lewis Schulman, superintendent of the Farmington Public Schools, and the members of the board of education are seeking ways to settle a controversy surrounding Campus Life, a religious group which has been active around North Farmington for the past few years.

Supporters of Campus Life believe the group provides wholesome, Christian activities for youngsters. Others feel that religious groups — no matter what their affiliation — have no business in or around the schools.

Farmington school officials could look to a small city about 500 miles to the southwest for one solution.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT of Muscatine, Iowa, a Mississippi River town of about 25,000, was faced with a similar situation when a group of "evangelical" ministers sought permission to visit students — and presumably to deliver their religious message — during lunch periods at the community's high school.

Muscatine's Board of Education voted, 7-0, last Monday to adopt a policy which would, in effect, keep the ministers out of the school.

No group will be allowed to come into any school in the district without written permission from the principal, the board's decision said.

Please turn to Page 6

Even guys still like it

By Diane Hofessa special writer

The absence of pretty girls is what



RANDY BORSZTA/staff photographer

Catholic Central senior Stephen Bodnar is convinced that the absence of girls at the all-boys school makes him better able to concentrate on his physics assignments with the help of teacher Russell Hesch (right).

Stephen Bodnar finds attractive about his high school.

Bodnar, a 17-year-old from Farmington Hills, is one of 1,100 students who attends Catholic Central High School, an unusual all-boy prep school in residential Redford Township.

Bodnar's school, which is 95 percent white and sends 98 percent of its graduates to college, is unusual because it is one of a decreasing number of all-boy Catholic schools in Michigan and may be in the nation.

IN THE LAST 20 years, four of Detroit's 11 all-boy Catholic high schools have closed. The population flight to the suburbs and increases in private school tuition in the face of hard economic times have contributed to the closings, said the Rev. William Stoba, deputy superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The pattern of school closings likely repeats itself, Stoba said, in other large cities experiencing the same population decreases and tuition hikes.

Catholic Central, where tuition is \$1,700 per year, moved five years ago from Detroit to suburban Redford to be closer to its students, school administrators said. The school at present attracts students from as far away as Owasco — about 80 miles.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS said it's the quality of education at the all-boy school and the Christian atmosphere that keeps Catholic Central's enrollment up despite the stiff tuition.

Please turn to Page 6