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Apartment rent hikes spur strike talk

By Joanne Malliszewski
staff writer

Disgruntled tenants in Beznos-Bestak apartment complexes will walk the picket line Sunday afternoon at Mulwood apartments in Farmington Hills to protest rent hikes of as much as 32 percent in the last 28 months. "It's our chance to make a statement," said Ronda Pretzlaff, an officer of the six-week-old Mulwood Tenants Association. "We're starting

out with Mulwood as our target spot." Tenants will picket 1:30-3:30 p.m. in front of Mulwood on Grand River Ave. Residents in the other Beznos-owned complexes of Waldenwood in Southfield, Fairmont Park and Kensington Manor in the Farmington area, and Aldingbrook in West Bloomfield are expected to join the protest. The Mulwood Tenants Association received the nod of approval for the scheduled picket from more than 180

tenants who met Monday night at William Tyndale College to discuss their concerns over the rent increases.

TENANTS MONDAY also discussed the possibilities of a rent strike and getting rent control laws passed in the state as well as in the cities.

Most tenants in the Beznos-Bestak complexes have received about four rent increases in the last 28 months,

said Rob Falls, a tenants association chairman.

But the firm's method of raising "rents at will" is the association's major bone of contention and purpose of the picket, Falls said.

Beznos-Bestak has been able to raise rents at its apartment complexes by not renewing leases, Falls said.

Leases have not been renewed and tenants have been forced to pay rent on a month-to-month basis, allowing

the landlords to raise the rent every few months, he said.

Beznos officials could not be reached for comment.

The association's scheduled picket comes on the heels of two unsuccessful meetings with Beznos-Bestak officials.

FALLS TOLD tenants Monday that officers attempted to negotiate with the firm's officials for:

- A rent rollback to January 1.
- A standing lease option.
- Recognition of the tenants association "to bargain on behalf of tenants."

"So far they have said no" to all of the association's demands, Falls said.

The firm's refusal to recognize the tenants association has put an end to further negotiations, Falls added.

In October, Louis Allen, Beznos official, said the recurrent rent increases at the Beznos-Bestak apartments are "unusual by historical standards."

One of the reasons for the recurrent rent adjustments, Allen had said, was to keep up with the market. Other complexes in the area charge near or the same rent, he said.

A MARKET study is always made before rents are increased, Allen added.

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About 180 angry tenants crowded the William Tyndale College auditorium to Tuesday discuss concerns about their rent increases.



Rob Falls: "We expect a rent increase every year. But when you don't know how much and it happens every few months..."

Marinuucci tapped as Hills top firefighter

By Joanne Malliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills has a new fire chief.

Richard Marinucci, 31, formerly a department lieutenant, will fill the position that has been vacant since late July when former chief Lawrence Karon resigned. Marinucci has been acting fire chief since Karon's resignation. Karon resigned about a week before

he was arrested on embezzlement charges. Karon is awaiting sentencing on a charge of embezzlement of \$100 or less. He pleaded no contest to the charge.

Farmington Hills council Monday unanimously confirmed Marinucci's appointment as recommended by City Manager William Costick.

Marinucci was chosen from a total of 26 qualified applicants. "After a review of these applications it was the unanimous recommendation

to me by the district chiefs (of the city's four fire stations) that I consider appointment of Richard Marinucci, our acting fire chief, to the position of fire chief," Costick said in a report to council.

BEFORE council took the confirmation vote, Councilman Joe Alkateeb lauded Marinucci's success in coming up through the ranks of the department.

"I'm happy. It's exciting. I look forward to getting the department mov-

ing," said Marinucci the morning after his confirmation.

Employed by the city's fire department since 1977, he has served as a lieutenant for the past two years.

The new chief's immediate goals for the department are to maintain existing programs and to keep things running smoothly.

"Things are running well now," he said. "There's no need to change anything."

His work with the department has in-

volved administering the Fire Prevention Bureau, including public fire education, arson control, fire safety inspections and code enforcement.

Marinucci also works with department training and emergency medical

services. He developed inspection, response and communication procedures, as well as promotional procedures.

Marinucci lives in Farmington Hills. He is married and has two children.



Dennis Beilung and Silri Scott are two of the stars in this week-end's rendition of "Night of January 16." To read more about the play turn to page 8A.

No room for the inn around town

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Inspired by a recent court success, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has warned Oakland County cities that they'll face lawsuits if they display Christmas Nativity scenes on public property this year.

Save your legal fees and rest your lawyers, officials of Farmington and

Farmington Hills might reply. Seems that, as usual, the Nativity—a Christian display depicting the birth of Jesus Christ—won't be seen on public grounds of either city.

"There's never been a Nativity scene put up in Farmington in my tenure with the city," said Farmington City Manager Bob Deadman, who's been with the city since 1987. "We've always celebrated the high holiday season, but

there's been no reference to Christmas itself."

The ACLU's court victory came on July 23 when Federal Judge Anna Diggs Taylor ruled that a Nativity scene placed yearly on the lawn of the Birmingham City Hall constituted "an unconstitutional establishment of religion."

TAYLOR'S RULING stated that the Nativity scene stood alone without any of the other traditional holiday symbols to offset the religious nature of the display.

Birmingham officials have said they intend to appeal the decision.

In Farmington Hills, a more religiously diverse community than its smaller neighbor, City Manager Bill Costick said there would be no Nativity scene.

"We don't display anything religious in nature," Costick said. "We don't have a Nativity scene or anything like that."

A Christmas tree in the lobby of city hall is about as far as Farmington Hills

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oral quarrel Wanted: Stories about landlords

Angry tenants of Beznos-Bestak apartment complexes in the Farmington-area and elsewhere plan to march a picket line outside Farmington Hills Mulwood apartments Sunday afternoon to protest, among other things, rent increases which they say have gone up as much as 32 percent in the last 28 months.

Many tales of woe about landlords were heard at a recent meeting of Mulwood Tenants Association. Beznos-Bestak "is taking unfair advantage of a tight rental market in

Oakland County," a protest leader claimed.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: What stories—good or bad—can you tell us about landlords with whom you've been associated?

To answer this question, call 477-5493 anytime before 1 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 16. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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Courtroom drama

Dennis Beilung and Silri Scott are two of the stars in this week-end's rendition of "Night of January 16." To read more about the play turn to page 8A.

Mercy structure explained

In the Nov. 5 edition of the Farmington Observer an article about Frank Beauford, 44, who recently won a racial discrimination suit against the Sisters of Mercy Province of Detroit and his supervisor Clark Bowman Sr., should have said he was employed by the Sisters of Mercy Province of Detroit.

Beauford worked in the boiler room of the physical plant at the Mercy complex on 11 Mile and Middlebelt.

Although separately incorporated, Mercy High School is owned by the Sisters of Mercy.

Beauford was hired by physical plant director Bowman who works for the Sisters of Mercy, according to Mercy High School officials. The high school does not have authority over physical plant employees. But the physical plant does provide heating for the high school building as well as the rest of the buildings on the campus.