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Council decision could be private affair

By Julie Brown
staff writer

Farmington Hills residents will have to wait until Tuesday to find out whether they will be excluded from a city council session that night that will determine the fate of the city's legal adviser.

"It's an item they (the council) asked

me to put on the agenda," said City Manager William Costick.

"When they come to that item on the agenda, they'll have to decide whether it will be an executive session. It's going to depend on what they decide Tuesday night."

In order to meet in secret, a majority vote of council members present is required, the city manager said. Seven

members serve on the council; a minimum of four are needed in order to have a quorum.

Council members met Tuesday to hear presentations from five law firms with municipal experience.

The firms included current city attorney Paul Bibeau's, Brennan, Bibeau and Fochlman, and four others: Cummings, McCrorey, Davis and Acho; Kemp,

Klein, Endlieman and Beer; Kohl, Secret, Wardle, Lynch, Clark and Hampton; and Patterson, Patterson, Whitefield, Manloff, Ternan and White.

The law firm presentations came as the result of an earlier council decision to review one of the city's consulting firms each year. The city attorney was chosen as the first for review.

MICHIGAN'S Open Meetings Act limits the conditions under which governmental bodies may meet in executive session, Costick said. One provision allows closed sessions for discussion of personnel matters.

"We follow it (the Open Meetings Act) very carefully," he said. "We don't have executive sessions unless it's for a legitimate reason."

The personnel provision of the act says sessions may be closed "to consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, when the named person requests a closed hearing."

The council will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Troubled kids are her beat

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Ask Pat Hinz if she feels the Farmington Youth Assistance program is successful in helping young people and she'll lean back, ponder awhile and answer thoughtfully.

"Yes. I do think it's successful. But we do have to measure our success in small ways," said Hinz, who joined the FYA in November after several years with the Walled Lake youth assistance program.

"In counseling, rewards are very intangible," she continued. "I see a lot of kids who are depressed and in pain. If I can help them I think it's worthwhile."

Sometimes those intangible hopes of success are turned into reality when young people she counseled years ago return with an offer of thanks for "being there" when they needed someone to talk with, Hinz said.

Although new to the Farmington program, Hinz, with degrees in social work and guidance and counseling, has been a part of the youth assistance program sponsored through Oakland County and the probate court since 1972.

IN FARMINGTON, as in other Oakland County communities which are involved in youth assistance programs, the organization is comprised of volunteers working cooperatively with Oakland County, the probate court, the local cities and school district.

Hinz replaced John Pinkerman who had been with the FYA for more than eight years.

"Following in his footsteps is a challenge," Hinz said, adding Pinkerman was largely responsible for the FYA's large community following and support.

But there's little doubt Hinz likes her new job. In fact, she asked to be transferred to the Farmington program. One of the reasons for her request was the FYA's community support.

"A real plus for Farmington is that it is so well-supported," Hinz said, referring to both financial and volunteer participation from the community.

Officially called a caseworker, Hinz's job involves counseling youths under 17 years of age, in trouble with the police or community, who would otherwise go to juvenile court, Hinz said.

MOST OF these youths, she said, are first-time offenders usually caught shoplifting or stealing a bicycle. The incidents are often the result of other problems bothering them.

And that's what Hinz is there for — to help youths who would go to juvenile court, be put through the system and still be without help in resolving the problem that caused them to, for instance, steal a bicycle.

Hinz also counsels youths who are not headed to juvenile court but who are having problems at home or school.

A lot of referrals come from the schools where a child is having problems behaviorally or academically which indicates there's other things in their lives that are causing them stress," Hinz said.

On the other hand, much of Hinz's caseload involves children who are having problems with their parents' remarriage or divorce. In these cases, parents or even the children themselves come to FYA and ask for help, she said.

"Adolescence is such a hard time anyway that there is a lot of stress and things they are going through that they don't discuss with their parents," Hinz said.

BUT HINZ always tries to get the parents involved with the counseling process. And most parents agree to participate.

"The whole family is affected," she said. "It's all interconnected."

Sometimes only one visit with Hinz is needed and the parents seem able to handle whatever problem is occurring with their child, she said.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Pat Hinz is the new caseworker at Farmington Youth Assistance.

Other times an incident such as shoplifting is "triggered by something else so we continue with counseling."

The amount of counseling depends on the problem, the youth and the family, Hinz said.

New to the Farmington program, one of Hinz's immediate goals is to become familiar with other agencies and resources that she could refer

youths and their families to when the need arises.

With an undergraduate degree in sociology, Hinz said she wasn't convinced she wanted to work with children until she worked in an intern program with Oakland County. In that program, she worked with children on probation.

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Local rabbis laud vote on women

By Julie Brown
staff writer

Farmington-area Conservative Jewish congregations last week came a step closer to having women rabbis.

The Rabbinical Assembly, the worldwide governing body of Conservative Judaism, voted to admit women as rabbis. The group announced its decision Thursday at a news conference at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

"I'm very happy with this decision," said Rabbi Elry Spectre of Congregation Adat Shalom Synagogue, 29901 Middlebit, Farmington Hills. "We are now using the best of our minds. The strengths of our women can now be used."

"I think it's marvelous. I think it's about time," said Rabbi Sherwin Wine of the Birmingham Temple at 28611 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills. "I'm sorry it took so long, but I'm glad they did."

Of the three major expressions of Judaism in the U.S., the Reform movement had ordained women for more than a decade. Orthodox Jews are opposed to women serving as rabbis, believing it would be a violation of Jewish law.

"The Conservative movement for a long time followed the dictates of Orthodox law," Wine said. The Reform movement for years followed the tradition of having a male clergy member, he said, as did most Protestant congregations.

"Our society had a kind of unwritten rule that your clergy member should be a man. Now, the Conservative movement has taken a big step."

WINE'S CONGREGATION is humanistic, or non-theistic, he said.

"It's not God-oriented, it's people-oriented. As far as we're concerned, we've always approved of women being humanistic rabbis."

The vote by Conservative rabbis was

635 to 267.

"It's going to create tension within the Conservative movement," Wine said of the decision. "It's going to bring Conservative and Reform closer together, and widen the gap between Conservative and Orthodox."

The reasons for last week's decision by Conservative rabbis are complex ones, Congregation Adat Shalom's Spectre said.

"To begin to explain something like this, you fall into the sea of Jewish law. It's very difficult (to explain)."

Conservative Judaism has been struggling for some time "in order to give women more complete recognition in the synagogue aspect of Jewish life," Spectre said.

Historically, women have played an important role in Jewish life, he said.

"You only have to read your Bible." As time went on, however, influences that played on Judaism "took their toll."

"Later on, women became less visible in certain aspects of Jewish life." However, women kept their influence on home life, including early teaching of children, he said.

Women were also exempted from certain obligations under Jewish law, Spectre said, such as having to attend services at a certain time of day.

"Women had to nurse babies," he said. "Biologically, the women had to be responsible for that part of life."

"THERE WERE always those who asserted themselves in various generations," Spectre said, but those women were the exception rather than the rule. Home responsibilities kept the majority of women too busy to get involved in public life.

The Torah, or Law of Moses, which consists of the first five books of the Bible, is the key to Jewish beliefs. Additional elements are contained in the Talmud.

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Cold weather tips help keep Fido, Tabby healthy

By Julie Brown
staff writer

We humans aren't the only ones to suffer when the temperature drops and the snow falls, our pets also feel the effects of winter's cold.

The same common-sense guidelines that help get us through the winter can also keep our pets warm and happy.

"They can stay out as long as they're active," said Dr. William D. Segula, a Farmington veterinarian. "But you can't let them sit shivering in the doorway."

"It depends on what they're used to. You're either going to have an indoor dog or an outdoor dog." Dogs that are accustomed to being outside will have a heavier coat than indoor dogs, Segula said.

"Basically, they like to sit by the fireplace, too," the veterinarian said of household pets.

"Winter is probably the time of year we hate to see the most," said Ron Blaut, director of education for the Michigan Humane Society, which is involved in prosecution of people under animal cruelty laws, sees more cruelty during the cold weather.

"Especially animals that are kept outdoors, the winter months are the ones that are the most draining on them," Blaut said. "You can get some serious problems with animals. We get animals that are literally frozen to death."

MOST OF the cruelty is unintentional, Blaut has found; some pet owners simply don't know how to care for their pets during the winter months.

In the fall, a good idea to check a pet's doghouse.

"Make sure that the shelter for the animal is windproof, and as leakproof as possible," Blaut said. In this climate, the opening of the doghouse should face the southeast, rather than facing the wind's direction.

The design of the doghouse is also important.

"The tendency is for most people to make a doghouse too big," Blaut said. It should be just big enough for him to stand in. The smaller size allows body heat to circulate, thus keeping the animal warmer.

The doghouse can also be placed in a garage, to provide shelter from the cold, Segula said. A two-compartment doghouse allows animals to crawl into

the back compartment, "so the draft can't get to them."

"If you can't have an enclosed front porch on it," the Humane Society's Blaut said. "That way, you have a natural windbreak."

The doghouse floor should be covered with good-quality clean straw, he said. The straw should be changed once a week; a hinged roof makes the changing easier.

A doghouse should also be built three to four inches off the ground. The gap lets air circulate, Blaut said, thus allowing the floor boards to dry out.

An outdoor dog may need a 10 to 15 percent increase in food intake during the winter, Blaut said.

"If they have to generate more heat, it's going to take more food," Segula said. "They should be smooth across the ribs, but not fat. The old saying about plucking an inch holds for dogs, too."

DOGS NEED fresh water at all times, Segula said. Outdoor water and food dishes should be checked frequently, to make sure their contents haven't frozen.

Just like their owners, pets need exercise during the winter months.

"You can't leave them out for three hours," Blaut said of house pets. "Use good common sense. I guess, would be the rule of thumb. So much, really, revolves around common sense."

"You don't want to overexert them," he said. "Just like us, they do need to get their exercise, too. You don't want to let them go through the winter getting fat and lazy."

"There is no hard and fast rule. Just don't let your pet stay out too long, especially if they're not used to it."

It's a good idea, he added, to wash a pet's paws with water after a walk. The paws may have been cut by ice, and chemicals used to melt ice may then irritate the skin.

The same common-sense guidelines also apply for cat owners.

"They are no different," Segula said. "You don't leave cats out either."

"The problem we see is cats are not real bright sometimes when it comes to automobiles," the Humane Society's Blaut said. Often, cats climb up onto the engine block of a car, in an effort to keep warm, and are then killed when the motor is started.

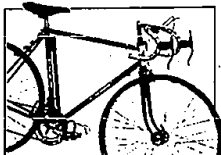
"We usually have a few of those a week, at least," he said.

It's a good idea for motorists to pound on the car's hood before starting the engine, to warn cats of the approaching danger — particularly if the car has been parked for only a short time.

"Let's just hope spring gets here soon," Blaut added. "I'm getting tired of this."

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