



Farmington Observer

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Library Board, chief huddle privately

Decline comment on controversies

By Julio Brown
Staff writer

Members of the Farmington Community Library Board of Trustees met in a closed session Wednesday with beleaguered Library Director Gordon Lewis. The library trustees refused, however, to make public anything discussed during the 50-minute meeting.

The refusal to reveal any information was based on advice of legal counsel, said board member Erolis Sauter. A representative of Plante & Moran, a Southfield accounting firm, attended the meeting. Officials have indicated that an audit of the library system's financial records will most likely be done in the near future.

The library trustees began by voting to close the meeting to the public. Michigan's Open Meetings Act allows closed sessions "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 the closed hearing."

Lewis left the meeting shortly before it was adjourned.

WIBBY was asked if Library Board members question Lewis about library operations during the monthly board meetings.

"You're probing into things I really don't want to comment on, so I'm just going to cut the conversation short. Thank you." He, too, then hung up the phone.

Seven professional library staffers — Christine Abbate, Linda Madden, Mary Pinkerton, Silvia Makowski, Barbara Cornell, Jill Locke and Denise Albrecht — have resigned since last November.

Locke had worked as branch head for the Farmington Hills branch and as children's coordinator for both the Farmington and Farmington Hills library branches. Protests over her February resignation — which followed 13 years with the library — brought the situation into the public eye.

Locke's resignation followed a decision to move her to a new position, that of Community Services Coordinator. The Community Services Coordinator "serves in an advisory capacity and is not directly responsible for staff supervision," according to the job description. In her previous position, Locke had supervised library employees.

The Observer has been unable to reach Locke for comment. Lewis has declined to discuss her resignation, referring to it as an "internal personnel matter."

QUESTIONS continued to surface this week regarding the administration of Lewis, who has served as director of the Farmington library system since 1974.

Lewis, contacted Tuesday morning by the Farmington Observer, declined to discuss the operations of the library system. He had canceled a Monday afternoon appointment with an Observer reporter.

"I won't be able to meet with you until later in the week," the library director said when called Tuesday morning. "I'll call you later in the week. Thank you very much."

"I'm really afraid there's not very much I can add to your story," Jim Wibby, a member of the Library Board, said Tuesday. "I'm just not in a position to comment."

HE HAS ATTRIBUTED the other resignations to "normal, routine" reasons.

Questions about the library's accounting practices have also been raised in recent weeks.

A document on "Expenditure of the Library Materials Budget," dated June 7, 1983, contains the following information:

"The Library receives a discount on many materials that are purchased. In



Gordon Lewis, the Farmington library's director, has been the focus of public criticism since launching his reorganization plan.

Former chief voices concern

By Julio Brown
Staff writer

Mary Mitchell is one of those concerned about the situation at the Farmington Community Library.

"I have sort of a grandmotherly feeling toward these places," said Mitchell, who served as Farmington Community Library Director from 1971 to 1974. Current Director Gordon Lewis took over in 1974.

The former library director is retired and living in Deland, Fla. She recently learned about the mass resignations at the libraries, and sent a registered letter to the Farmington Observer on the subject.

"I've put my thoughts in that letter," said Mitchell, reached Monday at her Florida home.

"I've never experienced anything called 'wholesale resignations,' and that's what really appalled me." Some of those who have left were hired by Mitchell.

"Especially Miss (Jill) Locke. I hired her, Mrs. (Denise) Albrecht. I hired. I still get Christmas cards from these people."

"I just don't understand in a well-run system how lots of people are going to quit," Mitchell said. "It appears to me that the present Library Board can't be very perceptive about what's been going on. It just doesn't all fit together."

"One of the reasons I wrote is I really think the board is probably being negligent," she said. "If the Library Board is unwilling to investigate, then 'surely the governing bodies (the city council) ought to.'"

Trouble in store for parents serving liquor

By Joanne Mellazowski
Staff writer

Parents who are planning a "house party" for their graduating high school senior are being reminded by police that legal trouble cannot be in store if liquor is served to anyone under 21 years of age.

"Parents who throw parties and allow kids under the legal drinking age to drink can in fact be charged," said Sgt. Richard Murphy of the Farmington Hills Police Department's juvenile division. "We've had it happen."

The fact that the party for the graduating senior is on private property with adult supervision does not change the fact that liquor cannot be served to minors, Murphy said.

Penalty for the conviction on a charge of serving or buying liquor for minors is up to one year in prison and/or a \$1,000 fine.

prohibiting the serving and selling of liquor to minors. It's foggy on legal responsibility for the actions of a person who has become intoxicated while at a private party.

Many people are under the impression that "Dram Shop Act" — holding bar owners legally responsible for the actions of their intoxicated patrons — applies to the hosts of private social gatherings.

But the issue is an appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court, said Larry Brya, assistant attorney general for the Michigan Liquor Control Commission.

What people are working under now is a 1983 Michigan Court of Appeals ruling (Longstreth vs. the party) which indicated that a social host can be sued for damages when an intoxicated guest under 21 years of age is involved in an auto accident, Brya said.

"This includes a social host," he said, adding in this court case the party was a wedding reception. "But this matter

is presently on appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court. So the decision (of the appeals court) can't be taken into effect."

THE BOTTOM LINE, Brya said, is that until the Michigan Supreme Court decides whether it will hear the Long-

streth-Fitzgibbon case, there's no safe answer whether a host can serve liquor without worrying about the being sued.

While this side of the drinking issue remains unresolved though, the law still puts the responsibility and criminal consequences of serving liquor to minors on the adult, he said.

"The other case (Michigan Court of Appeals) is a civil cause," Brya added. "Serving liquor to minors may be illegal, but that doesn't mean graduation parties can't be fun."

The national SADD organization,

formed several years ago by Bob Anasaus, provides a party guide for parents looking to throw their teen-agers a party minus alcohol.

WHILE MICHIGAN law is clear on

Please turn to Page 4

Record number file for school seats

By Joanne Mellazowski
Staff writer

School district voters will have 14 candidates to choose from when they go to the polls Monday, June 10, to fill two seats on the Farmington School Board.

"This (the number of candidates) is the most by far we have ever had," said Scott Bacon, district administrative assistant. "But this is the first time we

have had two positions open without incumbents running."

The 14 candidates will vie for two seats held by veteran school board members Emma Makinen and Richard Wallace. The two board members are not seeking re-election when their four-year terms expire in June.

A PRIMARY election will not be held to narrow the field prior to the annual school election in June despite the

number of candidates seeking election to only two seats, Bacon said.

The two candidates with the highest number of votes will be the winners, he said.

All the candidates returned their petitions by the April 6 deadline. They have until 4 p.m. today to withdraw from the race, Bacon said.

The candidates are Donald C. Allen, Joan Brown, J. Thomas Buck, Jack Cotton, Helen Dilzharz, Roxanne Fitzpatrick, Patricia Girbach, Maxine Harwin, Michael King, Rick Kasser, Marty Krohner, Joan Moran, Sara Lee Wollard and Albert Zolton.

Allen is the financial manager for the Royal Oak School District. He has lived in the Farmington district for the last six years and is a member of the Kenbrook Parent-Teacher Association.

"I am willing to do my part as a member of the community," Allen said, adding he believes his financial background could be of help to the school board.

Buck, an employee and organization development consultant at General Motor's Bus and Truck plant, is making his second bid for election to the school board. He made an unsuccessful bid for election last year.

A resident of the school district for six years, Buck says he believes his professional background can be of help to the school district in its efforts to provide students with skills needed in a continually changing work world.

AN ACTIVE member of the Farmington-Area Jaycees, Buck also teaches at Walsh College.

Cotton is the Farmington School District's former athletic director who retired in 1983 after 27 years on the job. "We have had a very stable board," Cotton said. "I would like to be a part of maintaining the stability. I want to maintain the quality of education (in the Farmington district)."

Dilzharz made an unsuccessful bid for a seat on the school board in 1981. He was unavailable for comment.

Fitzpatrick is making her second bid for election to the school board. She made an unsuccessful bid for a seat last year.

A former president of the district-wide Parent-Teacher Association Council, Fitzpatrick is currently the scholarship fund chairperson. As a member of district task forces, she has studied the closing of Alameda and Middlebelt schools, as well as the sale of other school properties.

"I see a real definite need for someone who has a variety of interests," Fitzpatrick said. She was also involved with the Farmington Families in Action and the South Farmington Baseball League.

King is an attorney who also holds a degree in education. He has lived in the school district for six years and is running for election because of his strong interest in education.

oral quarrel

What's your guess about Tiger's year?

The Detroit Tigers began yet another baseball season this week. As anyone who lives in the Detroit area must know by now, the Tigers won the World Series last year. Sparky Anderson's team will once again try to win the Series this year.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

Do you think the Detroit Tigers will win the World Series this year? What advice would you give to Sparky Anderson, to help his team once again be the world champions?

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

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