

Farmington Observer

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Hills pays bigger tab for lawyer

By Julie Brown
staff writer

Taxpayers will fork over an additional \$33,000 next year for municipal legal fees.

Corporation counsel is budgeted at \$181,000 for 1985-86, as compared to \$148,000 budgeted for 1984-85. Those amounts include expenses for prosecution, court litigation and defense, labor relations and miscellaneous expenses.

Farmington Hills City Council members unanimously approved the city attorneys' contract at last Monday's meeting.

The agreement between the city and Brennan, Bibeau & Poehlman of Farmington Hills will continue until Dec. 31, 1985, unless terminated before that date by the city. At year's end, the city council will decide whether to retain the firm.

The contract provides for payment of a monthly retainer of \$4,500, to be paid on or before the 15th day of each month.

"LAST YEAR, the retainer was \$3,900 for one month's services," said Karen Birkholz, assistant to the city manager.

The 1985-86 city budget provides \$54,000 for the legal retainer. In 1984-85, the figure was \$45,500.

"It's a standard form contract," Farmington Hills City Manager William Costick said. "It lists everything the way we've been operating."

"This just reaffirms the contract he

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Beauty effort sees revival

By Julie Brown
staff writer

The Farmington Hills Beautification Commission is about to get a new lease on life.

City Council members agreed unanimously at last Monday's meeting to reactivate the commission and to authorize the mayor to prepare a list of recommended appointees.

The commission, which dates back to the days of Farmington Township, has been dormant since 1980, said Mayor Jan Dolan.

"It was never reappointed back then."

Council members hope to appoint nine members, including representatives from the business community and residents, the mayor said.

"And then anyone who is just interested, (who) has a sincere interest in seeing us make this a more aesthetically pleasing community." Appointments should be made by mid-August, she said.

Four people — Lincoln Avery, Kay and Bill Blakeney and Bob Van Avery — have made definite commitments to serve on the commission, the mayor said.

"I HOPE to get a representative from each garden club. The representative I want is one of their landscape design critics."

"We have some very active garden clubs. They have been in the past, and I'm sure they will be in the future."

The commission is needed now, Dolan said, particularly with the city's Planning Commission keeping busy with site plan review and zoning requests.

"With so much building going on, so many changes, they're busy. We have a lot of areas that were not covered."

The Beautification Commission will be responsible for developing a communitywide program of beautification and improvement. The commission's role will include recognizing those who have maintained their property and encouraging others to do the same.

COMMISSION MEMBERS WOULD be able to look at problem areas and come up with several concrete suggestions for improvement, the mayor said.

"Some people are willing to go ahead and do it, but they haven't the foggiest idea of what to do." Having those specific suggestions and knowledge of where to go for additional information, will be helpful, she said.

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Road bid wins nod

One of Farmington Hills' fastest developing transportation corridors will be widened this fall.

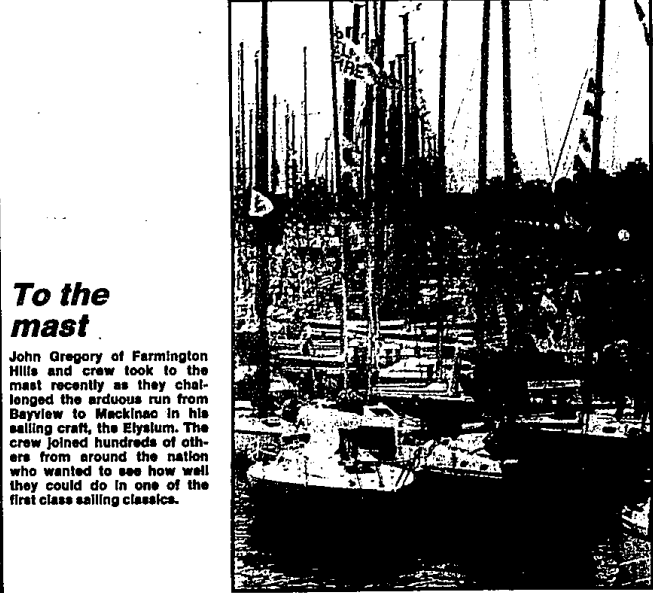
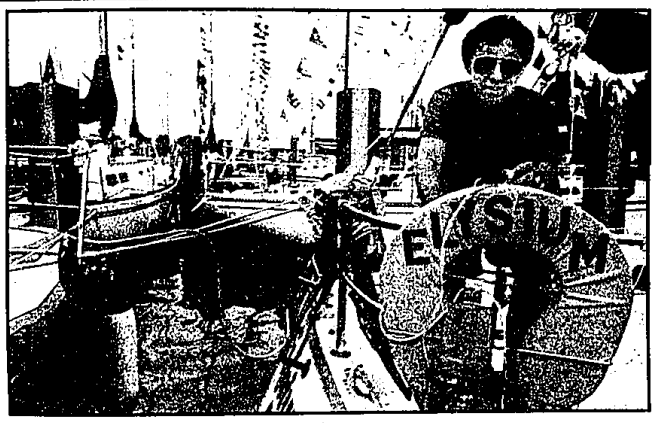
The project includes the widening of 12 Mile Road to five lanes from just west of Farmington Road east to the into the existing four-lane section east of Orchard Lake Road.

Estimated cost of the project is \$2,002,600 with Farmington Hills' share being \$520,400. That amount is still an estimate, due to the undetermined cost of inspection which will be billed at an hourly rate by the Oakland County Road Commission.

In addition, some of the right-of-way costs are still being negotiated.

The Michigan Department of Transportation received bids on the 12 Mile

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To the mast

John Gregory of Farmington Hills and crew took to the mast recently as they challenged the arduous run from Bayview to Mackinac in his sailing craft, the Elysium. The crew joined hundreds of others from around the nation who wanted to see how well they could do in one of the first class sailing classes.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Just finishing is victory for Great Lakes skipper

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

"The lake almost won on this one," Handicap Racing Formula Division said Gregory, skipper of the Elysium (PHRF), according to a spokeswoman, I. sailing solo. "Anyone who got their for the Bay View Yacht Club, sponsor boat to Mackinac Island was a winner of the annual sailing race."

It was quite an adventure.

The Elysium finished in an elapsed time of 70 hours, 41 minutes and 54 seconds. The second, corrected time which takes Elysium II finished eighth out of 24 in Class I and 108th in the Performance

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Law aids teachers to retire

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Improvements in the public school employees retirement system recently adopted by the Michigan Legislature have opened the door for as many as 83 eligible Farmington School District teachers to retire.

"We could face, within the next two years, a large number of retirements by teachers," said Robert Coleman, district personnel director.

Fearing that high inflation rates as well as increasing health care costs could water down their retirement benefits, many Farmington School District employees who are eligible for full retirement have been hesitant about leaving, said Superintendent Lewis Schulman.

But legislation signed by the governor on July 10 provides Michigan public school employees with improved retirement benefits as well as greater incentive for older employees to retire.

"It's the most significant change in the school employees retirement law since its inception," said Coleman. "All of the changes are either self-funded by school employees or the retirement fund itself. So the changes will not cost Michigan taxpayers any more money," Schulman agreed.

"I think it's a very imaginative and ingenious plan which doesn't pose a burden on the state government at all. And it does provide an incentive for people to leave early," he said. "All school districts in Michigan contribute to the retirement fund."

To be eligible for full retirement, employees must be either 60 years old with at least 10 years of service or 65 years old with 30 years of service. Under the new plan, starting Jan. 1, 1986 through Dec. 31, 1988, it's possible for employees who are 50 to retire if they have 30 years of work service, Coleman said.

In other words, the new plan allows, at least in the next three years, an employee to retire with full benefits if the total of their age plus years of service equals or exceeds 80. (Example: 50 years old plus 30 years of service equals 80), Coleman said.

HOW MANY DISTRICT teachers this temporary provision could affect is unknown, Coleman said.

Also a significant improvement under the new plan is the increased benefits for previous retirees, Coleman said.

Current retirees will receive an 8 percent increase in benefits effective Jan. 1, 1986. A 3 percent increase on the employee's original average salary that was used to calculate benefits will be paid in October of each year.

Under the new plan, current retirees may add their spouses onto their health care coverage with 90 percent of the costs picked up by the retirement fund. Previously, the retirement plan covered only the retirees, not the spouses, Coleman said.

Although the new plan contains many detailed provisions, the final most significant change deals with increased benefits for those employed on or after Jan. 1, 1987, who choose to contribute 4 percent of their earnings to a tax-deferred investment plan.

Generally, an employee's retirement benefits are calculated on an average salary over their best five years of in-

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Aid sought to develop park

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

For the first time in its history, Farmington Hills is contemplating aiding a subdivision in levying a special assessment to purchase property.

The Meadowbrook Hills and Woods Homeowners Association wants to buy 7.9 acres from the Farmington Board of Education for a neighborhood park.

Although school board members have agreed to sell the property for \$70,000, the homeowners association lacks the authority to assess residents within the subdivision.

"The association doesn't have a mechanism to charge or assess each property owner (for a portion of the purchase price)," said Karen Birkholz,

assistant to the city manager. "They came to us and asked us."

The city council in March passed a resolution stating its willingness to help out and establish a special assessment district for the purchase of the property.

As part of the stipulations included in council's resolution, the homeowners association in June presented a petition showing that 77.5 percent or 260 out of the total 334 houses to be assessed supported the planned purchase and proposed special assessment district.

Although city officials scheduled a public hearing for July to discuss the proposed special assessment district, the homeowners association asked for a postponement until a purchase agreement can be hammered out, said Dr.

Ron Paler, chairman of the association's park development committee.

"We're waiting for something to take place," said Farmington School District Superintendent Lewis Schulman. "The board has given approval. We are holding it (the property) for them (homeowners)."

UNDER A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT district, the city would enter into a purchase agreement for the property with the school district. The homeowners association would pay back the purchase amount through assessments against each property owner in the subdivision off of Eight Mile.

City officials also have requested a lease agreement between the city and the homeowners association holding

the city harmless in any legal actions as well as holding the subdivision responsible for maintenance and improvements to the proposed park, Birkholz said.

Although owned by the school district, the land has been used as a park by neighbors since 1978.

Homeowners finally asked to purchase the property, which had been targeted as a school site since 1968, when school officials decided to sell some of the district-owned acreage because of declining enrollment.

Neighbors declined to buy the property instead of taking the chance that the acreage would be sold to developers, Paler said.

"We will develop it as a community resource," Paler said.

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