

Hills forums turn spotlight on park's development

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 two weeks earlier scheduled the special meeting with residents without knowing planning commissioners were also scheduled to review the site plan on the same evening, Potter said.

Yet, according to planning staff, site plan review was not scheduled for planning commission discussion until at least three days before Thursday's regularly scheduled meeting. Commission agendas are planned at the beginning of each month. Park site plan review was included on the latest of two agenda addendums.

When he realized the site plan would be discussed at both meetings, Potter said he assumed there would be no problem because the plan had been modified to accommodate residents' concerns voiced at a meeting in June.

BASED ON the planning commission-approved plan, the athletic park will include two baseball/softball fields and two soccer fields. In the fall, the two ball fields can be used for soccer. Originally, the plan called for three soccer fields. The parking lot's size has been doubled to accommodate 180 cars.

"The last time you were here, a lot of your comments were registered," Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Dennis Fitzgerald said.

Modifications in the original park plan that conform to residents' concerns include the addition of a fence around the park, fewer fields, a sidewalk and more landscaping to buffer the park from adjacent residential areas, Potter said.

City officials confirmed that the park would not be lighted and that use would be controlled.

"We have no plans for lighting. This is not a facility that will be used by adults," Potter said. "The park will be controlled. There will be only one entrance to the park and it will be closed at the appropriate time in the evening."

RESIDENTS WANTED a written guarantee that the city would not change the park, such as by adding lighting in the future, but city officials declined. One parks and recreation commissioner called residents' request an "unrealistic expectation."

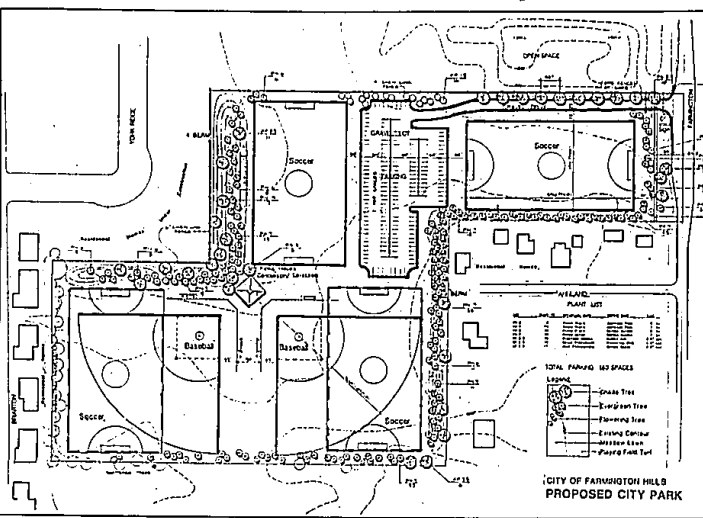
Residents also asked for a six-foot-high fence around the park rather than the four-foot-high fence shown on the modified plan. Although parks and recreation commissioners were uncertain about the height, planning commissioners requested the higher fence.

Planning commissioners also requested increased landscaping near the parking lot and that the plan show a walkway leading to the park from a neighborhood on the west, even though there is no intention to develop the path, Gardiner said.

In response to requests from members of area soccer and softball clubs, city officials included on the plan a concession stand and restrooms.

But that addition drew opposition from residents, who suggested installing a drinking fountain instead. Planning commissioners, however, told parks and recreation officials that while the concession/restrooms is shown on the plan as only a possibility, plans will be required should it become a reality.

"We are talking about addressing the needs of parents and youngsters who might need to use the restrooms," Potter said.



AT LEFT: This is the plan approved by the Farmington Hills Planning Commission for the new athletic park to go in near the northwest corner of 13 Mile and Farmington roads. The youth-oriented park will include softball and soccer fields, which will be ready for use next spring. The park also will contain picnic tables. Revenue generated by passage of a half-mill exclusively for park development will pay for the \$310,000 project.

Sign making is his specialty

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placed. By the time he returned to the Department of Public Service, a neighborhood resident was calling. The sign had already disappeared, taken by one of what seems to be countless admirers of street signs.

"I'm doomed," Sweeney said, when it comes to streets named after women. The hardest sign to keep is "Tina," but "Sandra" and "Elena" present their share of

problems, too.

Sweeney has not always been a sign maker. He is a graduate of mortuary science from Wayne State University, a licensed embalmer. It is work he describes as a scientific art and something to which he wants to return someday.

A more complex man emerges when Sweeney speaks of his work. And of Vietnam. He was drafted at age 24. "Embalmers were needed, let's of us. And we had to be li-

signed," he said.

To relax, Sweeney's idea of a good time is reading "Scientific American" and other such publications.

Sweeney and his wife, Mary, live in Farmington Hills in a home filled with antiques the couple have collected over the years. In addition to their son, Sean, they have a daughter Shannon, 12.

City council OKs variances

A Farmington resident was granted a limited fence variance Aug. 18 after telling the city council the higher fence was necessary for the safety of his child.

Lindsay Clay was granted a variance allowing his installed 6-foot fence to remain "for five years, or sale of the house, whichever occurs first," according to the unanimously adopted council motion.

His 3-year-old child can apparently open the bedroom window and exit the house, and he is concerned for the child's safety. The family lives on Orchard Lake Road.

"This gives us the ability to require the fence to be reduced to the original size if the situation changes," said Councilman Richard Tupper.

Councilman Arnold Campbell asked, "Who's going to go back in five years?" and monitor the situa-

tion. "It's a record-keeping thing."

THE CITY'S ordinance requires a fence constructed in front of the rear building line to be no more than four feet high, according to a city report.

Both Tupper and Councilwoman Shirley Richardson spoke against the variance, although they voted in favor of the motion.

"I think our ordinances are passed and adopted for a reason," Tupper said, suggesting Clay get a lock for the window. "To begin to give . . . variances to me is a major consideration."

Richardson said "we must adhere" to ordinances. "I'm not sure it should be a permanent situation."

The fence ordinance was originally adopted for "aesthetic considerations," according to City Manager Robert Deadman. "I think you may want to take that into consideration

in making a decision."

The Clay's wooden fence was erected two months ago by a person who never got a permit, according to information presented at the meeting.

ALSO GRANTED a variance were the Drakeshire Shopping Center tenants, who will be allowed to install temporary signs on their businesses until remodeling of the center is complete.

The council voted to allow Detroit Optometric Centers to place a 25-foot, low pressure, cold-air balloon on the Arbor Drug building in downtown Farmington as a promotional gimmick for 20 days following the store's grand opening.

The company plans to open a new store in the Arbor Drug, building in mid-August, according to a spokesman.

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