

Gushing geysers?

Flooding problems leave residents fed up

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Residents in Farmington's Bel Aire subdivision say they are fed up with basement flooding problems and a recent Farmington High School project which they believe could be making their problems worse.

"We cannot fully enjoy our homes because of the problems," said Richard Hoy, who has lived in the subdivision for 14 months and recently wrote to the city of Farmington about the neighborhood concerns.

Neighbors said they wanted something done about the flooding problem, and asked that the city assessor review their property assessments, which they believe should be lowered due to the problems.

Residents told the city council horror stories Monday about a situation which is apparently uninsurable, and has cost residents up to \$9,000 in damage including the loss of photographs, books, furnaces, carpeting, paneling and appliances. One long-

time resident estimated he had lost some \$50,000 in items since he moved into Bel Aire in 1956.

Another resident talked about water in his basement drain "shooting up like a geyser."

MANY BEL Aire residents who moved there in recent years said they were not aware of basement back-up problems in the neighborhood, which have apparently gone on for years. The problems have become worse in the past two years because of excessive rains, especially in June of 1989 and in May and August of this year.

The city will ask its engineers to attend a Dec. 16 city council meeting and public hearing to discuss the sewer problem and what, if anything, can be done for the residents.

Concerns about a project updating the high school sports field and subsequent drainage problems have already been taken to the Farmington Board of Education. City officials told residents Monday there is little they can do about the situation there

'I guess I'm concerned about what's going to happen in the springtime. It's obvious where that water's going to go — into our basements.'

— Dale Smetek
Lamar Street resident

because school district projects are governed and inspected by the state. However, they said they would invite school officials to the Dec. 16 meeting in the hope that any problems can be discussed and rectified.

DALE SMETEK was one Lamar Street resident who has been concerned about the school project which he said has left standing water in his back yard despite an open drainage system.

what's going to happen in the springtime," he said. "It's obvious where that water's going to go — into our basements."

City Manager Robert Deadman said Bel Aire residents have experienced problems over the years because of the weeping tile system under the basements there, and where the subdivision is located. If too much storm water from too many houses gets into the tile system, it is pumped into the sanitary sewer system. When that overloads, it backs up into residents' basements. Bel Aire, he said, is at the "low end of the outlet."

Public services director Earl Billing said recent sewer work on nearby Mooney Street, which removed some of the commercial buildings from the drain they shared with Bel Aire, should help the situation.

Deadman said the city would also be checking to ensure that residents have moved their downspouts at least five feet away from the house and that the ground slopes away from the houses.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Taking a stand

Key Rodgers, a flag carrier with Farmington High School's marching band, certainly knows when to stand still. During last Saturday's pregame marching performance, Rodgers got caught with a flag in her face. The sophomore stood at attention for several minutes while the band played. At the song's conclusion, the band was put "at ease" and the spectators in the stands gave Rodgers a hand. Farmington beat Redford Union, 13-9, in the football game.

Appellate court says local firm not liable for fatal auto accident

Farmington Hills-based Bestak Management Co. was the winner in a recent appellate court ruling on a civil case stemming from a March 1985 fatal auto collision in the Mulwood Apartment complex in which a West Bloomfield woman was killed.

On Oct. 30, the Michigan Court of Appeals affirmed an Oakland County jury's verdict and denied a new civil trial for Sharalyn Lambert, personal representative of Beverly Ann Lambert, the Wayne State University student from West Bloomfield who was killed in the accident.

Sharalyn Lambert had sought a new trial through the appellate court.

Appellate judges Thomas Brennan, Martin Doctoroff and William Murray voted to affirm the Oakland County Court jury's verdict.

Lambert's attorney could not be

reached to comment on whether they would seek relief from the state's highest court.

Her claim arose from the auto accident, which occurred on Mulwood Drive, a private road running through the apartment complex which is owned and managed by Bestak.

A vehicle, driven by a tenant, Connie Doa, crossed over the center line at about 11:30 p.m. and collided head-on with another car driven by Beverly Ann Lambert, who was there visiting a friend. Lambert died as a result of injuries suffered in the crash.

Sharalyn Lambert's claim against Doa was settled out of court, according to appellate court documents.

Sharalyn Lambert's case was later amended to claim that Bestak had allowed Mulwood Drive to become unsafe.

Doa, who was legally drunk at the time of the accident, was convicted of manslaughter for Lambert's death and was sentenced to a six-month work release sentence, which required her to spend nights and Sundays in the Oakland County Jail. Her sentence also included five years' probation.

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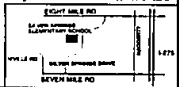
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