

# Hills sticks with 'citizen mayor'

Sometimes, different is better. At least that was the consensus of the Farmington Hills City Council concerning the issue of electing a mayor.

Councilman Terry Sever, a former mayor himself, brought up the idea of having city voters — not the council — elect the mayor to a two-year, rather than a one-year, term at a recent council meeting. And although Mayor Jen Grant agreed with Sever, the rest of the council liked the current system of one-year terms, with the council deciding the issue. Councilman Ben Marks, a for-

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*Councilman Ben Marks*

mer mayor and a member of the original city charter committee, said after looking at how 30 other cities elected their mayors, the committee was unanimous in choosing a one-year term. "We never wanted the mayor's job to become a political force,"

Marks said. "Seven citizens would lead the city." Grant and Sever both said it takes the mayor several months to know the job and become effective. That leaves little time for making a real impact, they said. But Councilwoman Joanne

Smith said mayors have been quite effective under the one-year format.

"We have never had a mayor who couldn't perform," she said. "I've never had one single person come to me in 36 years asking why don't we change our form of government."

Marks added that having an elected mayor can lead to more divisiveness and hinder the city manager.

"This city has a reputation of having a model government — a government by the people," Marks said.

## Mayor from page 1A

the mayoral term from one to two years through city elections only a week before, they both joined other council members in unanimously selecting Bates for the one-year post.

Grant praised Bates for her hard work and help during her tenure on the council.

"Two years ago voters in Farmington Hills re-elected Nancy Bates by an overwhelming majority," Grant said. "She has done a great job. She has thoroughly researched every issue."

Councilman Larry Lichtman, unanimously voted mayor pro tem, also praised Bates, 53, who has been a legislative aid to Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, for the past two years.

"I think we share a fundamental view of the city of Farmington Hills," Lichtman said. "And that is: This is a place where I want to live, where I want to raise my family."

Bates, who has lived in the city for 19 years, said she expected to spend more time with citizens, learning their concerns.

"They deserve a mayor who is approachable and representative," Bates said.

Bates said she has no specific agenda for her upcoming term, but added that the Eight Mile corridor is a project she and Dolan both want to see succeed.

"There is a lot of work to be done," she said. "I went to the first meeting (of the Eight Mile Road Task Force). I was skeptical. But now I think we are moving toward a resolution."

Bates said improving the 27-mile stretch is important because Farmington Hills, as well as other cities, can not prosper if Detroit continues to decline.

"We have a vested interest in seeing that Detroit does well," she said.

She also sees property taxes and recreation facilities and programs as concerns for the city in the near future.

Lichtman, an attorney with the firm of Butzel Long in Birmingham, is continuing a family tradition by serving as mayor pro tem.

The father of three will serve as mayor pro tem 20 years after his father, Frederick, did. His father was also mayor in 1974-75 and a member of the committee that drew up the city's charter.

"I think we've got a pretty good group on the council together, working together," he said.

Land acquisition, primarily for recreational use, has become a priority, unlike years ago, when the city was reluctant to venture into those types of projects, he said.



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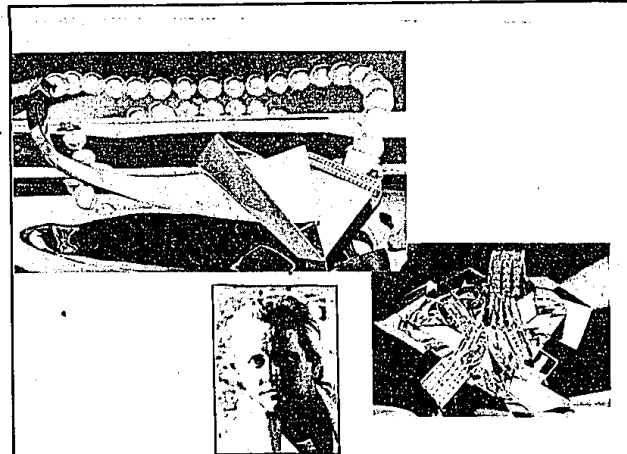
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