

Preservation plea

Power Road residents to get hearing Aug. 17

BY HILL COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

Residents of one of Farmington Hills' most historic and bucolic areas will have a chance to make the case for keeping it that way.

At the July 13 Farmington Hills Planning Commission meeting, residents of Power Road north of 11 Mile got their wish for a public hearing, which will be Aug. 17.

"We realize it is unusual for a homeowners' group to request rezoning, and it may be without precedent," said Jim Thiering, a Power Road resident and North Power Road-Philbrick Farms Homeowners Association spokesman.

"But we feel this new approach

should be the order of the day," he added, "if the citizens of this city wish to preserve as much as possible of an area that we love."

The area includes the historic Philbrick Tavern on a stretch of winding road formerly part of Powerville, the village founded in the 1920s by the Power family. The 30 other houses along the half-mile stretch ending at the south campus of Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus are a mix of sizes and styles that proponents of a zoning change believe are more suitable to a less dense zoning — RA-1s — than the current RA-1 zoning.

The road was designated as a Natural Beauty Road in November of 1994 because of its abun-

dance and variety of trees, plants and animals in a relatively untraveled part of the city. But a proposed 41-house development, which would be possible under the current zoning, threatens the area's quality of life, the residents maintain.

City planning consultant Claude Coates Jr. told planning commissioners with the surrounding areas being less dense, the rezoning would make sense.

"There is good reason to make a change," he told commissioners.

Commission Chairwoman Jeri VanHouten and Commissioners

Jack Rajkivich, Paul Blisman and Glen Fleischacker said they were pleased that by approving such a change, they might hurt some residents whose property does not now fit the larger size requirements of an RA-1s zoning. VanHouten said she was concerned that if residents whose properties don't meet the required setback or lot size requirements were to request a variance, they might have trouble.

"They would have to show a hardship, and it can't be self-imposed," she said.

But City Attorney Thomas

Schultz and Coates both said that would not be the case for an individual looking for a variance.

Attorney Steven Kiousala, representing the developer, Joseph Trupiano, said the change would create problems for his client who was going forward "at great expense in reliance" on the current zoning that would allow such a development.

"There is no compelling reason to change (the zoning)," Kiousala said, adding that the change would result in "spot zoning" to keep the area the way present residents liked it.

By Kernicky, past president of the homeowners association, said although 15 lots on Power do not meet the RA-1s standard, six of those nonconforming lots are larger than the required 33,000 square feet but do not meet the 140-foot frontage requirement. But that compares favorably with the adjoining RA-1s areas of Biddestone Woods and Quaker Town. Quaker Valley Road has the same number of nonconforming lots as Power Road, he said.

The commission voted unanimously to set the public hearing for Aug. 17.

City looks at teen program funding

BY HILL COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills City Council has another program it thinks is worth paying for, but hopes to do so without expanding government.

For that reason, the city's Commission on Children, Youth and Families is planning a benefit ball to help pay for a teen center program when city and grant money for it run out.

Because it was already budgeted as part of the city's parks and recreation tax, Farmington Hills has \$200,000 available for a teen center program. That would provide the city's match for a two-for-one state grant that could come in at up to \$387,000, giving the city almost \$600,000 to develop and run a system of teen centers and transportation to them.

"The objective is to make Farmington Hills a family-friendly community," said Mayor Joanne Smith.

Assistant City Manager Steve Brock said the city is re-submit-

ting a more detailed grant application and will find out whether it will get a grant, and how much, sometime after Aug. 15.

Even if it does get the grant, more money would be needed to pay for the program, which would likely incorporate teen activity centers at the YMCA on Farmington Road, the Farmington Hills Activities Center on 11 Mile, and a location in the southeast part of the city.

Councilwoman Nancy Bates suggested establishing a community foundation to pay for these types of projects. That would make contributions tax free. Former parks and recreation commission chairman and current city council candidate Dennis Fitzgerald endorsed that idea.

Fitzgerald pointed to an educational foundation in Waterford as

an example of a successful, although smaller, community foundation.

Todd Lips, chairman of the Commission on Children, Youth and Families, said that the commission is planning a "Cornucopia Ball" for Nov. 11 to provide money beyond the three-year life of the grant.

The black-tie optional event will be at the Farmington Hills Activities Center and will cost \$100 a ticket.

"The idea is that it will be an annual event," he said. "By the time the grant period is over, we will have built up enough to keep funding the program."

That also would give a foundation time to get off the ground.

"Our hope is that no young person has to be turned down for any activity in the community," Lips said, adding that most of the proceeds from the ball will go to the teen program and the rest will go to Team Farmington, the Special Olympics group representing Farmington and Farmington Hills.



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