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Election RESULTS

Farmington Hills City Council	
Jerry Ellis (I)	6,800
Jon Grant (I)	6,844
Massie Kurzeja	3,305
Cheryl Oliverio (I)	6,955

Parks & Recreation Millage	
Yes	6,770
No	2,640

Woodland Hills Nature Park preservation amendment	
Yes	8,225
No	1,175

(I) - Incumbents
Gold face type indicates winners

HELEN FURCEAN / STAFF ARTIST

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STAFF PHOTOS BY JERRY KILMER

Number watch: Mary Ellis, wife of Farmington Hills Councilman Jerry Ellis, points out votes on the computer to top vote-getter Cheryl Oliverio at Farmington Hills City Hall Tuesday night. Below, the re-elected team of council members Jon Grant, Oliverio and Ellis are all smiles.

Voters reaffirm Oliverio, Grant, Ellis for council

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi's reacts to the vote, the future. Page A18

A typical light voter turnout for a city election in Farmington Hills returned all three incumbents to the city council Tuesday for four-year terms.

Four candidates sought the three open seats on the seven-member council.

Cheryl Oliverio, who is mayor pro-tem on the current council, led in votes with almost 29 percent of the 9,669 votes cast. The city has 54,269 eligible voters.

Right behind Oliverio were Jon Grant with 28.5 percent and Jerry

Ellis with 28 percent.

The fourth candidate, former council member Massie Kurzeja, got just under 14 percent.

The turnout of 18.6 percent of eligible voters "is typical" of a non-gubernatorial, non-presidential election, said City Clerk Kathy Dornan. "Unfortunately, people don't think a city election is important enough," she said.

Councilman Terry Sever, who was not running, said Oliverio told him she feared she wouldn't get any votes

because she didn't get the Observer's endorsement.

"I told her she'd be the top vote-getter," said Sever, who said he's watched city elections very closely since losing his first bid for a seat 15 years ago.

Sever said Oliverio's door-to-door campaigning helped her.

Oliverio said her concern in the coming years would continue to be public safety. With an aging communi-



Please see WINNERS, A6

Hills' voters big on parks

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER

Martin Shoushanian probably said Tuesday night what a lot of Farmington Hills voters felt about that day's park and recreation millage election.

The longtime resident, speaking as he left his Gill Elementary School polling place, said he's seen what parks can do for a community and "I'd like to see it happen for the next generation."

The desire to benefit today's youngsters was reflected in a lopsided vote that extended the 0.5-mill levy well into the next century.

With 72 percent of the voters favoring it, the proposed extension of the expiration from June 30, 1999 to the same date in 2009 passed by a 4,130-vote margin.

The levy means a home valued at \$150,000 would be assessed about \$37 more per year in taxes.

Voters also passed a related issue - Charter Amendment 2, ensuring that Woodland Hills Nature Park keeps its natural setting and wildlife habitat - by an even bigger percentage. Some 87.5 percent were in favor, for a whopping 7,050-vote margin.

The victory of both issues reflected the citizens' confidence in the current city council, particularly with regard to spending tax money as it says it will, said incumbent Councilwoman Nancy Bates.

"When we put a proposal out there, we deliver what we say we'll deliver," Bates said.

Shoushanian, a resident of the

Please see PARKS, A5

Sarah Fisher's students aren't often problems

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

One recent incident aside, Farmington schools officials last week emphasized that youngsters from the Sarah Fisher Home for Children who attend classes in the district generally don't pose safety or disciplinary problems.

On Oct. 21 at Power Middle School, an 11-year-old student - who was then living at Sarah Fisher - lost control after someone reportedly threw a gum wrapper at her. Before she could be restrained, the girl swung at a classmate; battled to get away from three staff members; and later attacked a Farmington Hills police officer by punching, biting and kicking the officer in the groin, according to police reports.

Students who attend from Sarah Fisher typically mesh well with those from traditional homes, according to Donald Cowan, Farmington schools' executive director for K-12 instruction and special services. And angry outbursts can happen to anybody.

"The staff there did a wonderful job working with the situation," Cowan said. "A lot of times, any of us might have an emotional situation - an argument with your wife, mother, girlfriend - and something happens. It's the straw that breaks the camel's back."

"I don't think this had anything to do with what went on there at Sarah Fisher. The student was taken to Children's Village in Pontiac and will not return to the school district."

"This was an absolute first for me," said Norm Luebke, Power assistant principal. "In my nine years here, this is the first time a student ever touched a teacher."

Luebke said there wasn't a fight. "She wanted to leave the room and (staff members) were holding the door knob to keep her in. She was out of control."

According to Luebke, the girl was one of "a couple" students attending Power this year from Sarah Fisher, which is a private facility located at 12 Mile-Ingater in Farmington Hills.

"We have limited enrollment in regular classes and they're doing great," Luebke said.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield said about 75 children from Sarah Fisher (which takes in special needs children from throughout metro Detroit) are enrolled into a program coordinated by the district's special educa-

Developer's advocate

Schafer stands up for his housing projects

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A mayor chews your head off and an elderly resident complains one of your newly built houses is blocking out the sun.

Worst of all, you cannot even get the carpet guy out to your new home.

The typical day in the life of a developer, perhaps, but Steven Schafer just drives on. Or, at least he tries.

The partner of Phoenix Land Development stops his sporty red Cadillac in the middle of 13 Mile - holding up traffic behind him - to point out one of six or seven projects his company has going in Farmington Hills alone.

"Everyone is always honking at me,"

said Schafer, 39, turning down a side road after getting beeped by an irate motorist. "When I'm on the road I've got blinders on ... I'm always looking at property thinking, 'Oh, there's a piece of land to develop.'"

Schafer's knack for in-fill development - where new homes are wedged in between existing subdivisions - gets him tied up in traffic at city hall, too.

Out in front

Such projects earn equal amounts of council members' consternation and resident wrath. Unlike other developers, Schafer doesn't hide behind smooth-talking attorneys or intermediaries; he faces detractors head-on.

"A lot of light is shed on Steve at the moment because he has a lot of projects going on in the city," said Dale Coutegan, Farmington Hills Planning and Community Development director. "What complicates things is he's out front on all of them and personalities tend to get involved."

Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi chastised Schafer for being insensitive to residents near his developments. Schafer



STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

Neighborly: Steven Schafer pauses outside one of his projects in Farmington Hills.

Please see DEVELOPER, A5

Parents charged for hosting teen beer bash

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The parents of a 17-year-old Farmington Hills High School senior were charged with providing alcoholic beverages to minors during an Oct. 26 keg beer bash in Farmington.

According to Farmington police reports, the teen's mother and stepfather hosted the party at their residence on Saxony and supplied the beer.

But police reports also included denials from the parents that alcoholic beverages were being consumed by minors in their house.

Party-goers told police that beer kegs were located in the basement, said Mike Wiggins, deputy director of the Farmington Public Safety Department.

Some estimates had more than 100 teens at the party, but Wiggins this week could not confirm whether that

total was accurate. Party-goers paid \$5 to come in and "drink as much as they wanted," according to police reports.

Farmington High School principal Jim Myers said it was his understanding that "a considerable number" of students from his school were at the party, which began about 7:30 p.m.

Wiggins said misdemeanor tickets were issued against both parents the night of the party for violating the

Farmington city ordinance that forbids "furnishing alcoholic beverages to minors under age 21." Maximum penalty: 90 days in jail and a \$600 fine.

Police reports indicated the parents "supplied a motel room and alcohol" for a party several weeks earlier, also attended by high school students.

Also charged with misdemeanors: the night of the Saxony party were 120

Please see BASH, A-4

Grant dances into town

Look for the first annual Farmington Festival of Dance to invade the community next month, courtesy of the Farmington Area Arts Commission and a grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Local dancer/choreographer/instructor Eric Johnston proposed the idea last spring.

With the grant, the festival schedule is set up as follows:

- Monday, Dec. 8, an open dress rehearsal of the Detroit Dance Collective, directed by 1997 Farmington Artist in Residence Barbara Selinger, will be hosted at Farmington High School.
- Tuesday, Dec. 9, the Farmington Public Schools

FARMINGTON FOCUS

will perform "DANCEABOUT 1997" by the Detroit Dance Collective at the Farmington High auditorium at 10 a.m.

- Thursday, Dec. 11, a master class in modern dance will be presented at Farmington High.
- Friday, Dec. 12, the festival culminates with its grand finale featuring performances by Farmington's best dancers in any style of dance (including local studio or school dance programs). The event will also feature performances by Barbara Selinger

and the Detroit Dance Collective.

The event is presented by the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services, the Farmington Area Arts Commission and Farmington Public Schools.

Halloween's over

Things were so slow at Precinct 1 during Tuesday's Farmington City Council election, that precinct worker Harry Farris couldn't stop himself from walking down the hallway and standing near the exit, peering out toward the parking lot. It was as if he was trying to will voters to arrive.

"I'm trying to scare them in," said Farris.

Please see STUDENT, A4