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Cities' leaders split on consolidation

By SUSAN AVERILL

Some Farmington councilmen seem to view Farmington Hills from the viewpoint of a mouse between the paws of a cat: consumption, though undesirable, is inevitable.

Such is the reaction of Farmington Mayor Ralph Yoder and councilman John Richardson about talk of consolidation of the two cities.

Richardson, who was known to favor the move when he was first elected to the Farmington council, is now opposed to it.

"They would consume us. We would have no political clout; the votes are out there in the Hills," he said in a telephone interview. "Before 1969 they were looking for leadership. I don't think they'd look to city people now. I doubt if anybody from the city could get elected."

Farmington Mayor Ralph Yoder agreed with Richardson.

"I think I can speak for the rest of the council when I say there is no sentiment for it (consolidation)," he said.

He said he couldn't see any advantage to the move now, but expects it to happen at a later date.

"EVENTUALLY, WE'LL probably become one, but their level of services would have to come up. They have so many problems of their own."

"I believe they would swallow us. We would have to conform to their way of thinking because of their size. Our way of doing business is so superior to the Hills," he said.

"I'm opposed to it (consolidation) at this time. I don't think it's time yet," Richardson said.

"I don't think the advantage was what it was in 1969 to talk about consolidation. They should have a lot more to offer before I want to sit down with them."

"I don't see it as an economic boon to us at this point," he said.

Richardson said he was branded the "Father of Consolidation" in 1969 when he helped form an ad hoc committee to study the subject. At the time, he said, "morale in Farmington Township, especially at the south end, was at low ebb. They were looking for leadership and they were looking toward the city because their own government wasn't providing it."

Both cities share certain services. While some Farmington Hills councilmen have said that consolidation would facilitate these services, Richardson doesn't agree.

"I don't like the idea of giving up our public safety department. I think we have a lot going for us." In the infancy of cityhood, Farmington Hills has begun a total growth pattern different from Farmington, he said, which would make the move tougher on both.

"THERE ARE A lot of different ways to get to Toledo, so maybe we'll meet you in Toledo," he said referring to future consolidation.

Farmington Hills Mayor Earl Oppertbauer said that a suggestion several months ago to consolidate the police and fire departments of the two cities was rejected.

"It appeared that others saw that as the first step toward consolidation and for that reason were against it," Oppertbauer said he approved of consolidation.

"I think it's an astirine situation to have the City of Farmington surrounded on three sides by Farmington Hills." To consolidate would be "more efficient and to the benefit of the taxpayers," he said.

For certain services, the cities are already merged, creating a unified school district, a district library system and a joint recreation commission.

"The two big things we don't do together is police and fire. We don't need two city managers, two departments of public works, etc. I think that a number of people in the City of Farmington are opposed to it because they don't want to become a part of a large city," he said.

Oppertbauer admitted some possible disadvantages of consolidation to Farmington but said that they'd eventually be corrected.

"The police and fire protection would be possibly diluted by becoming part of a large city. But we're already helping each other by a mutual aid pact."

FARMINGTON HILLS Councilman William Ortmann said that while it made "real good common sense" to consolidate both cities, "I can't think of any advantages to the Hills."

Ortmann said reluctance to lose a community position might be a motivating factor against consolidation.

"Sometimes city fathers want to perpetuate their own jobs. It's more of a prestige thing."

The advantage of the move would be all Farmington's, he said.

"The new city looks out for the old one... sort of a big brother—you can't very well say 'father' because of the age difference. Not the Orwellian Big Brother, either."

Ortmann said he thinks the people in the City of Farmington would prefer consolidation, but the city fathers are holding back.

"You talk to the people in the City of Farmington and they're for it. You talk to the councilmen and they're against it. I think (most of the people) would rather be a part of the Hills."



The king and queen

Homecoming royalty at Farmington High School this year are Mariene Anagnostella and Paul Eveleth, who reigned over coronations at the game between Farmington High School and Livonia-Stevenson. To see more of the action see Page 3A. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Managers claim:

Survival is issue for ice rinks

By CORINNE ABBAT

The question of an ice rink has brought hot and cold reactions in the Farmington Hills council for three years.

Finally last week, council voted 6-1 to open the doors for a private rink by retaining land at the corner of Drake and Freedom roads. Businessman Ron Hanaway requested the zoning change.

If Mayor Earl Oppertbauer is, as he says, concerned about over-saturation of ice rinks in the area, he is not alone.

While both public and private rinks are hard hit by rising utility costs, the private ones apparently are reeling even more under the load.

Tom Crane, manager of the privately owned Novi rink, has a warning for anyone considering going into the rink business.

"If a person thinks in terms of immediate profits, he should look somewhere else. It takes five to seven years to turn over to where you have money left."

Utility and equipment costs are the killers.

"Our equipment mortgage payments are higher than our building mortgage," Crane says.

City committee offers tree sale

The City of Farmington and its Beautification Committee, in cooperation with Bishkopf Nursery, are offering a variety of trees at discount prices for fall planting. The discount will continue until Oct. 4.

One of each tree includes delivery and planting and carries a one-year guarantee.

The coupon should be presented or mailed with check or money order to Farmington City Hall, 2500 Liberty Street, Farmington, 48024.

Large trees are priced at \$35 and will include crimson king, silver maple, mountain ash, honey locust and Norway larch.

Medium-sized trees at \$25 are eight to 13 feet and include mountain ash, shademaster locust, Norway maple, crimson king and marshall seedling ash.

Ornamental trees are short at four and five feet, and will sell for \$15. They include the purple leaf plum, red or pink flowering crab and a pink flowering cherry which needs well-drained soil.

BECAUSE OF UTILITY rate hikes, Novi prices are higher than the neighborhood municipal rinks. Ice time is \$55 an hour, compared to \$30 an hour at the Westland rink and \$60, \$60 and \$30 in Birmingham, depending on the time. Top price in Chicago for ice time is \$75 per hour.

But Westland doesn't have the problems which face many municipal and private rinks.

"We're in a unique situation," Westland manager Russ Scott says. "Our building is pretty much paid for, and we don't have to depend on the money we bring in."

Westland's two-year-old rink was financed through federal shared revenue.

"We have practically no time available," Scott says. "The hockey associations buy most all of our ice. About the only time ever available is 11 p.m. to midnight when we close."

The Westland rink closes the end of March for a couple of weeks, reopens for a spring festival and during summer has a tennis program. Four courts are set up on the rink, and rental is \$1 an hour.

Over-saturation of the rink is a problem which is constantly before Birmingham rink manager Roger Faensch.

"We had square dancers on Friday nights last summer, and that was really popular. Next year we hope to have an antique show, a flower and garden show and a coin show. Anything that is a service to the community and where we can pick up a few dollars, I'm interested in."

Faensch faces the same problem as other rink managers: rising costs and revenues that fail to keep pace.

"Our bills have doubled in the last two years, and even though we've raised prices, we have not increased our revenues."

The rink cost \$1.1 million when it was built several years ago, and there is an annual bond payment of \$70,000. "Our revenue is down from last year. Hopefully, it will pick up later on," Faensch comments.

One problem, he says, is so many rinks in the same area competing for the same skaters.

"MANY PRIVATE RINKS are going under and going into receivership. They just can't bring in enough to make it. When a new arena comes in, all those in the area suffer. Anyone who starts a rink now had better be sure it is in a very good market area with non-union employees. Other than that, all I have to say is 'good luck.'"

While Crane says the Farmington

amateur hockey teams skate exclusively at the Novi arena, there are some going to Garden City.

Garden City rink manager Denny Rivard says, "Farmington teams play in our spring leagues, and Farmington kids are in our hockey programs."

He says the popularity of the sport is growing "at an incredible rate in Farmington."

Originally an outdoor rink, the Garden City arena was enclosed for between \$50,000 and \$60,000 from the general fund. It was intended to come from a bond issue, but when state approval was held up while consideration was given to Puma's Stadium, the city went ahead on its own.

Rivard, who has many friends who

own private rinks, says he prefers these municipally owned.

"I feel they're more serviceable, and then they are responsible to the city. And it's definitely harder for a private rink in an economic crunch. The private rinks are really hurting because of the continuing rise in utility rates."

The Zamboni machine for cleaning and resurfacing costs \$77,000, Rivard says, up \$2,000 from last year.

During the summer the Garden City rink is used for tennis, lacrosse and special events such as the circus last summer. Class enrollment is steady at around 200 and all ice time is taken. Occasionally there is some from midnight to 3 a.m. for groups not on the regular schedule.

Board to hire more teachers

The Farmington Board of Education has approved the hiring of 14 teachers.

The teachers will be evenly assigned through the elementary, junior highs and special education facilities in the district. One teacher, Joan Dodson, will teach Spanish and American history at Farmington High School.

Ethelyn Grissell, hired as a Title I teacher, will teach at Highland, Fairview and Woodcock elementary schools and the Sarah Fisher Home.

Six of the teachers will work with children who have learning disabilities. These teachers include Norman Jenkins (Boys Republic), Margaret Kasey (Warner Junior High School), Marsha Kuber (East Amer-

High School), Robert Rodger (Boys Republic) and Gretchen Smith (Larkhore Elementary School).

Julie Bertin will be a speech and hearing consultant to the hearing impaired at Woodcock Elementary and Mary Campbell will join the preschool learning disabilities staff at Kenbrook Elementary.

CHARLOTTE MERRITT, a Title I teacher, will teach reading at Boys Republic and Barbara Myers will teach speech correction at Cloverdale Developmental Center.

All three remaining teachers will be at Farmington Junior High School. Nancy Rizzo will teach English and social studies. David Valtaggio will teach mathematics and earth science and Ellen Wallis will teach art.

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A NEW COLUMN

Corinne Abbat, Observer & Eccentric staff writer, has developed a column with the singles set in mind. To see what she has to say turn to Page 10A.

Vote says LWW

Models for the new T-shirt, now on sale by the West Bloomfield Farmington branch of the League of Women Voters are Sandy Schwartz and State Representative Sandy Brotherton (R-Farmington). Blue letters on a white background read "Vote — 8 messages from the League of Women Voters" and will be sold by Mrs. Schwartz, a resident of West Bloomfield and finance chairman for the local LWW.

(COUPON)

BICENTENNIAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

CITY OF FARMINGTON BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Type of Tree Name

Quantity Ordered Address

Price Phone No.

City of Farmington, 2500 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan 48024