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Council faces elderly housing question

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

After more than a year of controversy, debate and research, the zoning proposal for senior citizen multiple dwellings will come before the Farmington Hills city council tonight.

City officials worked through last week compiling the 30 page report which the city's housing commission will present at 7 p.m., tonight at city hall, Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake Road.

Under consideration will be the adoption of one of two zoning designations which would allow developers to build multiple dwellings for senior citizens. The first proposal, RCE, would allow senior housing with a maximum

height of 25 feet. The second proposal, RCE-1, calls for housing with a maximum height of 60 feet.

As a point of reference for readers, Botsford Hospital is 60 feet high, with five stories and the Orchard Ridge campus building J is 30 feet high. Most residential homes are approximately 25 feet high.

CONTROVERSY revolves around whether the city should open the door to mid-rise housing units and whether those units should be allowed to be built near subdivision housing. Opponents believe such construction would adversely affect the property values of private homeowners and ruin the city's low rise integrity.

Leading the battle against the two zoning proposals are the Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills. Earlier this year the group distributed a flyer which was a collage showing apartments looming over single family homes. The caption read: "Welcome to Farmington Hills 10th Anniversary 1973-1983."

The Homeowners' group denies it is opposed to senior citizen housing, but objects to allowing mid-rise construction in the city. The group fears that after allowing senior mid-rise any other developer could come in and also build such structures.

But proponents of mid-rise senior dwellings say it is essential to have such a zoning designation to meet the

needs of a growing senior citizen population. Mid-rise zoning, they maintain, is the only economically feasible way to attract developers to build such projects.

A REPORT released earlier this year by the housing commission, showed that by 1980 the Hills will need 1,310 units to house senior citizens. The commission report estimated that 431 units will be available at that time so an additional 879 will be needed.

Presently, the city is short 532 units, with 833 needed and only 301 available.

But opponents of zoning approval say the housing commission report

was insufficient and that plenty of housing already existed with construction going on at such private senior facilities as Baptist Manor and Marion Oakland West.

Senior citizens income also comes to the fore in the zoning issue. The housing commission's April report showed that a study by the United Community Services revealed that 11.3 per cent of elderly Farmington Hills residents were at the poverty level in 1976. In 1970, the figure rested at 6.1 per cent.

Because of senior citizen generally low income levels and special facilities needed at the senior citizen housing units, the report concluded that mid or high rise units would be

needed to make the facilities economically feasible.

WHILE THE housing issue began with a proposal by the Nardines Inc. asking for rezoning behind the Nardin Park Methodist Church to build its own senior housing unit, the issue has stretched all the way into this year's council election where three members of the homeowners council entered the race.

One of those candidates, Joanne Soronen, placed in the top four positions in the primary. But Councilman Earl Oppenhausser, who is seeking reelection, has vigorously supported senior citizen housing and he placed first in the primary.

Mackinac Island next

Jogger find life begins at 50

Joe Babiarz is a collector. His Farmington Hills home is the comfortable retainer of good books and off the wall mementos.

Lost in size against the suit of armor in the hallway and the headless carousel rider in the garage is Babiarz's newest trinket—a metal cup

on a marble base to commemorate his birthday run around Belle Isle.

After deciding that turning 50 is a momentous occasion, Babiarz wanted to run the 5 1/2 miles around the island in 50 minutes. It took him 58 minutes and 54 seconds.

"I'm 50," he explained, pointing to

himself. "There are things you'd like to do but the body just won't respond."

His efforts were spurred on by neighbors who helped him formulate the plan one evening over a couple of beers. One beer led to another as the friends decided that Babiarz ought to

run somewhere significant.

A run between Middle Belt and Telegraph was deemed inadequate for the occasion. Then, someone had the bright idea of encouraging Babiarz to run around Belle Isle.

"All my life, I've been going to Belle Isle, but I never jogged around it," he said.

ON THE BIG DAY, August 21, friends Floyd and Marilyn Mattson, Jim and Sharon Culbertson and Mary and Carl Daily joined his wife Ruth to round out a combination birthday party and cheering section.

"My neighbors followed me in their car around the island, yelling encouragement—things like, 'Hurry up, we're thirsty.'"

After all that encouragement and jogging, the party retired to the comforts of a champagne breakfast.

Undaunted, Babiarz is contemplating running Mackinac Island, a nine mile run over uneven ground.

This mania with running over significant Michigan landmarks began innocently enough when a co-worker filled a lunch hour extolling the virtues of jogging. He slept better, ate better and was less tense because of an evening jog.

Intrigued, Babiarz began to jog last April. At first he ran a quarter of a mile, then walked for a quarter of a mile.

"I did that for the first six weeks," he said. He found that jogging did what the co-worker promised.

"It dissipates tension. In no way can you be tense and jog. It rolls off you. It's the greatest thing in the world."

PART OF HIS SUCCESS in keeping to his jogging regime goes to his wife who credits with patiently keeping supper warm and waiting while he jogged around Lincolnshire East subdivision.



Runner Joe Babiarz exhibits the form that enabled him to endure 5 1/2 miles of jogging through Belle Isle on his 50th birthday. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Main drag walk pondered between Gill and Halstead

By LYNN ORR

Bikers and walkers in Chatham Hills subdivision and nearby areas may have a direct route to downtown Farmington in their future if the homeowners' association is willing to aid in construction costs.

Farmington City Mgr. Robert Deadman presented a feasibility study to the city council last week outlining the costs and plan for a sidewalk on the south side of Grand River from Halstead to Gill Road, which would connect with existing sidewalks to downtown.

Mavor John Richardson had requested the study after hearing several complaints from parents and residents concerning the dangers of biking or walking alongside Grand River.

About 5,600 lineal feet of concrete sidewalks, plus engineering and land banking, would cost approximately \$16,000—a price the city is hesitant to assume without some help

from homeowners. Construction problems might make it necessary to lay the concrete about one foot from the curb on Grand River, Deadman explained.

"From the photographs in this report, we can see that serious topographical problems exist that would make the construction of sidewalks difficult in certain areas," he said, "specifically from Smithfield to Drake Rd."

"**WE FOUND** that it would not be practical to construct the sidewalk in the normal location, which is one foot from the property line. Consideration would have to be given to the obstructions along the Grand River right-of-way. Therefore, in certain areas, the sidewalk would be within one or two feet of the back of curb along Grand River."

The council members projected that snow pushed up on the sidewalks in the winter might make them unusable under this plan, but Richardson believes

consultation with the Chatham Hills homeowners for their reaction to the plan should be the next step.

"People out in Chatham Hills have expressed to me that there should be a way for their children to get downtown," he said.

Several alternatives were presented for financing the sidewalk construction by Deadman. A resolution could require any new construction on existing vacant property to include the construction of a five foot sidewalk. Voluntary participation by homeowners who would most benefit from the improvement, and a resolution requiring all existing commercial and office properties along Grand River to construction sidewalks are other possible financing plans.

Resident Joanne McShane, present at the meeting, suggested the construction of blacktop paths to cut costs, but Deadman said blacktop construction costs for this type of proposal would be similar to asphalt construction.

Watch out Winchell, WORB is on the air

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

After facing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Farmington School Board, Farmington residents, Farmington City Council and the provost and trustees of Oakland Community College, Mike Schwartz's dream of an educational radio station in the two cities is coming true.

By early November, Farmington area residents should be able to turn on WORB by setting their radio dials at 90.3 FM. If Schwartz's plans germinate, residents will listen to classical, jazz and rock music in addition to radio drama, talk shows, lectures and news about the two cities and the Orchard Ridge Campus.

For Schwartz, WORB's station manager, planning that sort of programming is the real reward after nearly two years of assorted red tape, which began with his effort to convince Broadcasting Guild faculty adv. Dr. Dan Greenberg to support a bid for a 10-watt radio station.

Although many students had talked about such a project, up until then, few were willing to put time and effort into nurturing the idea into reality.

TIME WAS RUNNING out for the move toward a radio station that would take the OGC announcements from broadcasting to students in the basement of one building to being heard in an eight to ten mile area. "We were looking in an area that had 10 high school stations and no college station. The frequencies were

being gobbled up," Schwartz, a Southfield resident, recalled.

"We had to make a move," he said. After convincing the contractors that the move would benefit both the community and the students, Schwartz began the "burdensome task" of putting together an application for an FCC.

That task had to be repeated twice since the license is so detailed. It even lists the geographic coordinates of the location of the station's tower. Since the tower was required to be located so that it wouldn't bump into the reception area allocated to neighboring high school stations, Schwartz's task was made more complicated.

He attacked the problem by drawing a circle in the area that the OGC station would be allowed to cover and went away thinking that the grounds of Forest Elementary School would be the perfect place. Parents and residents thought the idea was less than perfect, citing fears that children could climb the tower.

OTHERS WERE annoyed by the prospect of looking out their living room windows at a 100-foot radio tower.

Returning to his map and the advice of Greenberg, Schwartz discovered he had overlooked a site—the Farmington Department of Public Work's complex on Nine Mile.

"I drew a circle through the DPW site and didn't know it existed," he said.

(Continued on page 9A)



Examining some of the station's equipment, WORB station manager Mike Schwartz plans for community wide radio service. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Hills agenda set

Tonight's Farmington Hills Council meeting starts one hour earlier than usual, at 7 p.m., and will be conducted at city hall, Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake, in the council chambers.

Leading off the agenda will be a presentation by the housing commission on its recommendation for special zoning for senior citizen housing. Following discussion on that issue, the commission on the aging will present a report on senior citizen transportation.

A public hearing on rezoning of property on the northwest corner of Orchard Lake and Eleven Mile was to be considered, but the petitioner, Ben Marks, has requested the council table the item until the Sept. 19 meeting.

Other items on the agenda: •Appointment to boards and commissions. •Consideration of a land fill application in Section 22.

•Consideration of adoption of a new building code for one- and two-family dwelling. •Award of a bid to Albert Dettorre for storm sewer construction in the Fleming Roseland Subdivision.

•Consideration of salt contract award to the International Salt Company. Also includes awarding bid for sand and gravel.

•Awarding bid for five inch fire hose to the Apollo Equipment Company.

•Consideration of awarding bid to the Pierce Manufacturing Company for a pumper fire truck and a 1,000 gallon pumper.

•Resolution to consider increasing cities flexibility to invest public funds. •Consideration of reimbursing the developer of the Green Hills subdivision for oversize water main.

•Adoption of a traffic control order for a flashing control at the intersection of Farmington Road and Fourteen Mile.

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M is for memory

Remember plaid skirts? Itchy sweaters? The smell of chalk and new books? Farmington Observer reporter Lynn Orr still does. She took a quick trip back in time by visiting her old fifth grade classroom. For a peek at some of her memories, turn to page 3A.