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Hills unveils land gift from resident

By LYNN ORR

An area industrialist will present an early Christmas present to Farmington Hills at tonight's city council meeting, official sources confirmed Friday.

The Farmington Hills resident, who's asked to remain anonymous at this time, will donate six acres of land located on the northeast corner of Freedom and Drake roads to the city.

Although there are no conditions on the initial land present, if the city constructs senior citizen housing on the site within the next three years, an additional 5.3 acres will be deeded to the city as well, the donor indicated.

The land gift was negotiated through City Clerk Floyd Cairns, who's been working with the industrialist for the last four months on the proposal. City council members were informed of the forthcoming present at a recent closed executive session.

Assessment of the value of the land is being conducted currently, but rough estimates are that the total 11.3-acre package will be valued at more than \$350,000. The land was rezoned recreational two years ago from a single-family residential zone status.

Apparently, the anonymous donor had plans for a recreational facility at one time on the site.

FARMINGTON Hills officials appeared delighted with the gift, while senior citizen housing proponents view the deal as a possible first step toward a city-owned senior citizen housing complex.

City council members are expected to accept the six-acre gift tonight although no immediate decisions are expected on whether senior housing plans will be initiated.

The donor indicated he would deeded over the additional 5.3 acres within 38 months or on the completion of construction of senior housing, whichever is later, if the city does construct senior housing on the six-acre site.



Not a jolly season for all

The annual visit of the jolly old man from the North Pole is not exciting to every child. For some, the long, white beard and puffy stomach can be frightening. Brian Kahshin was less than thrilled about

being on Santa's lap during a recent visit to Oakland Mall. But Santa will probably be forgiven after he makes his annual visit on Christmas Eve. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

Businesses react

Licensing faces critics

By LYNN ORR

A two-pronged attack on Farmington Hills' recently-adopted business licensing ordinance is being waged by an individual pinball arcade manager and the Farmington Chamber of Commerce.

Troy attorney Robert B. Frederick, representing Alfred Diverno of the Fun Factory located on Orchard Lake Road south of Thirteen Mile, filed suit challenging the constitutionality of the ordinance last Thursday.

Meanwhile, chamber members are gathering ammunition to wage a public battle with the Hills city council at a February meeting. At least one council member has promised chamber members a slot on the agenda at that time to voice their objections on the ordinance, which takes effect Jan. 1, 1978.

Although the ordinance closely follows other business licensing ordinances enacted by cities in Michigan, Frederick is convinced the ordinance can be legally challenged.

"What we are saying is that the statute is unconstitutional in that it denies equal protection under the law, and it's a deprivation of property without due process," Frederick maintains.

He claims the ordinance unfairly restricts the age of patrons and operating hours for amusement centers.

"The entire ordinance does not have a similar restriction for bowling alleys, pool halls, and other similar establishments," he says.

The ordinance restricts those under the age of 18 from patronizing pinball arcades unless accompanied by an adult. Business hours also are restricted. The City of Farmington has similar restrictions on pinball centers, according to City Mgr. Robert Deadman.

A hearing is scheduled for Jan. 11 in Oakland County Circuit Court, in

which Frederick says will ask for a restraining order prohibiting the city from ticketing under ordinance violations.

THE TIMING of the ordinance and the annual renewal fee are chamber objections to the business licensing, according to chamber president Ed Lane.

"I think a lot of the business people would go along with a one-time nominal fee for registering, but the renewal fee just adds another layer of bureaucracy,"

Lane's office received numerous calls last week, after letters notifying businesses of the ordinance were received.

Applications, including the fee, for 1978 licenses are due Jan. 1. A penalty of 25 per cent is mandatory for applications received within 15 days of the due date, while a 50 per cent late charge will be added to those applications received after Jan. 15, the ordinance stipulates.

Although the city council adopted the ordinance on Nov. 28 and the city charter includes a provision for business licensing, the business community believes the council's timing was poor, Lane adds.

GETTING a master list of all businesses in the community is the most important reason for the ordinance, says City Mgr. George Majors. While officials anticipate receiving about \$45,000 in revenues during the first year of licensing, the annual revenue will decrease, since renewal fees average about half of the initial application fee.

The regulation also may allow the city to minimize business personal property tax delinquencies, since taxes must be paid prior to the issuance of a license.

Initial application fees average

about \$30, "just about the cheapest in the state," Majors says.

Most cities have similar regulations, he adds.

"The whole idea is to enable us to serve them better."

Fire's aftermath leaves family bereft

By ELIZABETH EHRLICH

William and Mary Walker's small rented house has the scrubbed, bare look of a young family's first home.

In fact, however, it is a makeshift sanctuary for a couple married some thirty years whose work of a lifetime was wiped out three weeks ago.

Last month, the Walkers watched their Farmington Hills home on 2116 Ontario, burn roof-to-ground and take everything they owned with it. They were left with six children still at home to support, no savings, no insurance and no place to go.

"We are at our wit's end," declares Mrs. Walker, a proud, plain-spoken woman whose hands move nervously as she speaks. "For 56 years I've worked my fingers to the bone, I've raised nine children, I've never been on welfare. Now everything's gone and what am I supposed to do?"

THE BRICKFACED frame house where the Walkers lived for 26 years burned in the early morning hours of Nov. 26. The family was awakened and evacuated by an unknown neighbor who saw the blaze and alerted the fire department.

Apparently caused by faulty insulation of a Franklin stove, the blaze was already "through the roof" by the time Farmington Hills fire-trucks were on the scene, according to Fire Chief John Van De Voort.

"It could have been burning for several hours by the time the fire was noticed," Van De Voort says, adding that the construction of the house

allowed the flames to move rapidly up the wall partitions. "There was no stopping it in time," he claims.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN good to us," says Mrs. Walker. Some \$600 raised by neighbors and local businesses have been donated to the family, along with furniture and clothing. The Red Cross disaster action team paid for motel rooms, provided disbursement orders for food and clothing, and supplied the first month's rent for the Livonia home the Walkers now occupy.

Even the new home was found through a community effort, when a neighbor attending real estate school heard of the family's plight and remembered the Chamberlain-owned rental property.

But for Mrs. Walker, grateful for this aid, "living on charity" is nonetheless a bitter pill to swallow. "I haven't spent most of the money," she hastens to say, "but the kids needed clothes."

THE FAMILY'S already tough situation is further complicated by an outstanding debt of \$10,000 to the Michigan National Bank, which the family undertook earlier in the fall in the form of a home improvement loan—a loan, in fact, which financed the self-installed Franklin stove.

Apparently the bank's lending policy did not require the Walkers to show proof of insurance at the time the loan was closed. But the couple, who at that time owned their house outright, were required to take out a bank mortgage "to secure the loan by placing the

property as collateral," according to an officer of the MNB Southfield branch, where the loan was made.

"We're not out to put people out on the street," says the officer, vice president George Kotsos. However, if the loan is defaulted the remedy may be the mortgaged property, he said.

For Mrs. Walker and her husband, who is employed by Davis Iron Works in Walled Lake, the possibility of not

being able to meet the loan payments is now a very real prospect.

And to add to these troubles, the city of Farmington Hills is requiring that the Walkers clear the burned house on Ontario, she says.

"They're saying I have to spend \$2,000 to clear the property or pay the city \$4,000 if they have to level it," Mrs. Walker says, agitated. "Where am I going to get \$2,000?"



The aftermath of a fire is stark reality, as the Walker family learned when their home of more than 20 years was transformed into a burned-out shell. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



The grin has it

Our Lady of Mercy basketball coach Larry Baker's had that winning grin all season, while his team has made its way to the state finals. For the results on the weekend's state finals tourney, and Mercy's place in the standings, turn to page 1C. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

Crime and justice course set for OU and Observer

Oakland University and Observer & Eccentric Newspapers will join forces again to present a Course by Newspaper on "Crime and Justice in America."

This newspaper will publish a series of 15 articles by scholars and law enforcement professionals in Thursday editions beginning Jan. 5.

Oakland University will use the newspaper articles as the textbook in a four-credit course on the Sociology of Crime and Punishment.

Weekly classroom sessions will be held 6:30-10 p.m. in the Birmingham Center for Continuing Education, 745 Purdy, according to Dr. Robert Stern of OU's Center for General and Career Studies.

Course fee is \$131. OU staff persons will handle enrollment the first night.

WHITE-COLLAR crime, organized

crime, street crime and race will be among the first topics to be discussed.

The course will then move to criminal law, civil liberties, law enforcement, pre-trial detention and criminal sentencing.

Author of the civil liberties article is Damon J. Keith, former chairman of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and former federal district judge for eastern Michigan. Keith recently moved to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

The course will close with a study of prisons—their history, the prison community and the future of punishment. This is the second collaboration of Oakland University and the newspapers in the Courses by Newspaper program. "Moral Choices" was presented earlier in 1977.

Courses by Newspaper is a project of University Extension of the University of California, San Diego.

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EARLY DEADLINES

Because of the holidays, deadlines for the Monday Dec. 26, and Jan. 2 editions have been changed. News items for these editions must be received in the Observer office, 36251 Schoolcraft, no later than noon Dec. 22 and Dec. 29.

Mercy girls take Class A cage crown, see C1