

Farmington Observer

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Santa stalks the town

Santa decided to make the rounds in Farmington and Farmington Hills this past week to make and get any last minute orders. To see what the jolly old gent found, turn to Page 3A. (Staff photo by Cyd Abatt)

Smoke alarm ruling delayed, proposal irks homeowners

By ELIZABETH EHRLICH

Homeowners' opposition has delayed a decision on a City of Farmington ordinance that would mandate smoke alarms for all single and multiple family residences.

Improper safety criteria and infringement of homeowners' rights were among the objections to the proposal at Monday night's city council meeting. A petition signed by residents of five Farmington subdivisions was presented by a coalition of homeowners.

City council members, citing the "need for more information" tabled the ordinance until Feb. 6 after hearing the criticisms.

"I supported the introduction of the ordinance, but I can't in good conscience support it now," said councilman Ralph Yoder.

The ordinance is a revised version of a proposal first drawn up in October by the city's public safety and building departments. In its current form it requires either hard-wire or battery operated smoke detectors to be installed within six months for a multiple dwelling and within one year for a single-family home.

"What we're trying to do is save lives through early warning," said Farmington City Mgr. Robert Deadman, defending the proposal. "And early warning means smaller fires."

A NUMBER of Farmington residents, however, contend that better ways exist to meet safety objectives.

"We all believe in smoke detectors as a safety unit, said Gregory McKeon, who represented the homeowners of Farmington's Tall Oaks subdivision. But, he claims, "voluntary compliance gives the best result."

Calling the ordinance ineffective, impractical and an "invasion of privacy no matter how well intended," McKeon, who is director of safety for Wayne County, added that inspection, maintenance, costs to those on fixed income, and insurance liability in case of fire, are not taken into account.

He questioned the city's ability to determine which smoke alarm models are appropriate for a particular home and where they should be placed.

McKeon said a public education

effort stressing evacuation procedure and fire escape routes in the home and instructing homeowners on early warning systems, but leaving home protection as an individual matter.

"Public demonstration and safety programs have not been a success," Deadman replied to McKeon adding that mandatory early warning systems don't encroach on the privacy of the home.

"It was not our intention to go from house to house to make sure an individual home is in compliance."

"But because homes for sale would be required to have an approved smoke detector system installed when placed on the market, compliance would probably reach 70 per cent of all private residences in about five years, he said.

Several council members agreed that public education efforts do not guarantee compliance with fire safety standards, despite the objections to the ordinance "as written" which nearly all expressed.

"The purpose of the ordinance is saving lives," councilman Warren Buckler said. "What if parents don't teach their children what to do in a fire?"

Students' voice wins school board approval

Students will have a voice without a vote on the Farmington school board for the remainder of the academic year.

The 5-2 decision this week was reached by trustees after two rounds of discussion during which another proposal to give a student representative a permanent board spot was scrapped. The advisory seat will last on a trial basis until June.

Opponents of the first motion argued that it would have encouraged other interest groups to lobby for a similar position. The size of the board could become unwieldy, according to opponents.

Even after the proposal was made more limited, Trustees Mervyn Ross and Emma Makinen maintained their opposition, questioning whether students were capable of adding to a discussion of district policy.

Calling the revised motion a potential "Pandora's box" Ross said members of bargaining units within the school system, parents groups and city officials could use such a policy to demand an advisory spot similar to the students'.

"It would tend to become cumbersome and not rewarding," he said.

SUPPORTERS of the measure to aid the student included Trustees Anne Struble, Helen Prutow and Michael Shipce. They persuaded Richard Wallace and President William Gravus to allow the trial term.

Mrs. Struble said that the experience would help students set a good pattern for later life.

"We may become overprotective of students but we must remember that they are a year from graduation, a year from adulthood and a year from voting," she said.

"I'm concerned about putting undue pressure on the president of the

Round Table (high school students' mock school board) but there are people who would want responsibility," she said.

As for the new position starting a move toward an expansion of the board, Shipce said that might be a good idea.

"I'm not sure it would be a bad idea to have representatives from the two cities on the board," he said.

Shipce, whose interest in the school board began in his own high school days, thanked his colleagues for passing the motion.

Superintendent Lewis Schulman said, "Morally we (administrators) represent the students as well as the staff. But I see no great violation in allowing for a student representative."

Finns celebrate 60th anniversary

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

On the basis of numbers alone, the political influence of Finland and its five million people should be insignificant compared with that of the Soviet Union and the United States.

But the enterprising Finns have managed to make a name for themselves through their peace keeping efforts under the auspices of the United Nations.

That's the assessment of former U.S. ambassador to Finland Mark Austad and Finnish Ambassador Jaakki Itoniemi. Both men were in Farmington recently to help the Finnish community commemorate Finland's 60th anniversary of independence at the Finnish Cultural Center. Finland has kept its freedom

because its people have "the will to keep it," according to Itoniemi, who became ambassador in October.

"There is a high degree of national unity. Our principal occupation is to mind our own business," he said.

Instead of taking a strictly isolationist stance, Finland has tried to become a peace-keeping force.

"THERE IS SOME ROOM for us to try to promote developments conducive to stability and peace," Itoniemi said.

"In the UN, we combine a policy of neutrality and initiative whenever we have felt we could promote peace," he said. "You can promote a peaceful solution to an issue if you don't have too much weight. You have to be care-

ful to choose the issue and pick the right moment."

Such a moment came in the autumn of 1973—at the start of the last Arab-Israeli war.

"I was in the UN when the Yom Kippur conflict broke out," Austad remembered. "Everyone believed that Finland should be in the peace keeping force. They didn't agree on very much that night, but they wanted Finland in the peace keeping force."

Finland troops remain part of the Mid-East peace keeping arrangement.

"We have 1,000 men there to keep the parties apart," Itoniemi said.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's peace overture were cautiously viewed by Itoniemi.

"The proof of every pudding is in the eating of it," he said.

"IT WAS A very brave act," he added.

Another site of Finnish peace keeping operations is Cyprus. After 10 years in the country, Finns have almost completely receded their troops for economic, not political reasons, according to Austad.

"We (the United States) haven't paid our share of the cost of the

Cyprus operation. Finland bears it unilaterally. We're five years in arrears," Austad said.

He blames the United States' poor record of payments on political rivalry with the Soviet Union. Both countries have yet to contribute their share for UN operations on the grounds that the other nation still owes its debt.

"The principle of the thing is that we shouldn't be punished for being effective," Itoniemi said.

Finland has been scrupulous about paying its own debts, according to both men.

It was the only nation to repay completely its World War II debt to the United States. The last installment of the \$3 million debt was placed into a scholarship fund for exchange students from the two countries.

"THAT PUTS FINLAND into a class by itself," said Austad who fell in love with the country during his stint as ambassador.

"It helps to have friend named Gerald Ford," he said with a wink, explaining his entrance into the diplomatic field. Austad is now president of Metro-Media Communications.

Taxi plan extended for senior citizens

Senior citizens in Farmington Hills have another three months to stake their claim on the discount taxi service inaugurated this fall as a pilot program.

City council members extended the taxi transportation service for another 90 days, while staff members will continue their survey concerning the effectiveness of the service as a viable senior citizen transportation plan.

While the council had agreed to subsidize the program up to \$1,000 a month, the subsidy total for October and November was \$588. The Mercy Center Gathering Place, downtown Farmington, Marjorie Oakland West, and the Farmington Plaza were the popular destinations of slightly more than 300 passengers during the two-month period.

To generate more business for the taxi service, Michael Dorman, assistant to the city manager, will conduct a formal survey of senior citizens using the service, as well as further advertise the service itself, he told council members at Monday night's meeting.

UNDER THE current plan, senior citizens 60 years of age and older, pay \$1 for one-way trips anywhere in the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills. Seniors who double up receive a further discount, because each additional passenger is charged 50 cents.

Trips to the Gathering Place, however, cost 50 cents each way.

While the Northwest Transport Co. reports that evening use of the taxi service has been limited, afternoon hours have seen some waiting problems.

"Generally, the few complaints we received were on the order of 'too long a wait' for the taxi during peak hours of 2-4 p.m.," City Mgr. George Majors reported to the council.

The taxi service is committed to transporting handicapped students to the Farmington School District during those hours, he added.

Senior citizens are encouraged to use the taxi service, Dorman says, which can be reached at 474-3333. Every effort will be made to pick up passengers within 30 minutes of the call, Northwest owner Vern Foster adds.

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As you finish your holiday preparations, don't forget that your Observer & Eccentric carrier will be stopping by soon to collect for the month. And be sure to save your receipt. It's worth a discount on the next classified ad you place.



Taking a break

Katie McNamara, leading contributor to Farmington Hills Mercy's 63-52 state championship victory over Mumford last weekend in East Lansing, takes a breather during the fourth quarter. She scored 21 points and grabbed 10 rebounds. For more on the big victory, turn to Section C, pages 1 and 4. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)