

Farmington Observer

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Smoke alarm option won by homeowners

By LYNN ORR

Farmington residents opposed to a mandatory smoke detector ordinance won their battle Monday night.

But Councilman Warren Buckler has pledged to continue the war to make smoke detectors mandatory in all single-family homes within one year.

Tall Oaks subdivision representatives in the audience applauded the adoption of a watered-down version of the controversial ordinance.

As adopted, the ordinance requires that all multiple units be fitted with smoke detectors within six months. Compliance for single-family homes, however, will be required when the house is sold or extensively remodeled.

A two-year compliance amendment for single-family units failed for lack of majority.

Mayor Richard Tupper and Councilman Ralph Yoder opposed the amendment, while Councilmen Alton Bennett and William Hartsock voted in favor of compliance for homeowners within two years.

BUCKLER, however, missed the meeting. He says he would have broken the tie in favor of the two-year compliance.

And he vows to introduce an amendment to the ordinance mandating compliance within one year for single-family homeowners.

Buckler believes the ordinance is too weak as adopted.

"I think most people will comply with an ordinance requirement, because most people follow ordinances," Buckler said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

The safety factor outweighs considerations of invasion of privacy, he says.

"We have lots of ordinances and building codes for safety reasons, and this is another one. Some people might not comply anyway, but the chances are better if we're stronger about it," he said.

"A mandatory smoke detector ordinance combined with a safety program is the best answer," he said. Tall Oaks representatives were pleased with the ordinance as adopted.

Homeowner Greg McKeon, who presented the subdivision's opposition to the mandatory requirement when the ordinance was introduced in December, thanked the council in advance for its support of "voluntary compliance."

He also suggested an on-going adult education program of fire prevention and safety.

The liability question posed by the homeowners was denied by City Atty. Robert Kelley.

"I don't see any way that the city would become liable if they pass an ordinance requiring some safety

level," he said.

Public Safety Director Dan Byrnes and Fire Marshall Norm Maddison both supported compliance within one year for single-family units. A stove fire in a Drakeville Apartment unit over the past weekend underlined the importance of smoke detectors, Byrnes said.

The smoke detector in an apartment failed to awake the apartment dweller, but it did awaken her neighbor, who called the public safety department.

"It points out that smoke detectors do save lives," Byrnes commented. However, Mayor Tupper remained firm in his opposition to a mandatory requirement, explaining that voluntary compliance could accomplish the same effect.

If most residents fail to install the detectors until they sell their homes, citywide protection will be longer in coming, Bennett countered.

Tupper also opposed the original ordinance on the grounds that he didn't like ordinances which couldn't be enforced. And because home inspections would not take place, the ordinance would be difficult, if not impossible, to enforce, he said.

Both Bennett and Hartsock stressed that while a mandatory ordinance wouldn't guarantee 100 per cent compliance, it would strengthen the city's position.

THE ORDINANCE as adopted now requires United Laboratories approved smoke detectors under the following stipulations: That they be installed in multi-family units within six months, and in single-family dwellings upon the resale of the home.

"The ordinance now requires that the owner or seller of any dwelling unit upon change of occupancy by sale, lease, or sublease or whenever a major alteration, addition or re-occupancy occurs, to install smoke detectors in accordance with the ordinance," City Mgr. Robert Deadman explained.

The owner must certify to the occupant that he has complied with the provision of the ordinance. The city's building department also must receive certification that smoke detectors have been installed and are in proper working condition, upon resale of a single-family or multi-family dwelling, he added.

...while council OKs fire service

Farmington would have to pay about \$1,400 a year to participate in a fire service cooperative with six other communities.

But it's a bargain, says City Mgr. Robert Deadman.

Under the proposed fire cooperative will generate a community benefit far beyond the financial outlay required," Deadman says.

"We believe that a sophisticated automatic response system, which would allow response of needed equipment and manpower to any fire with central radio dispatch control, would be more than worth the proposed expenditure."

The council voted unanimously to enter into an agreement with the Aracoma Fire Service Cooperative, joining Farmington Hills officials who took action on the agreement last week. The other communities are Novi, Wixom, West Bloomfield, Walled Lake, and Commerce Township.

The proposed annual budget for the cooperative is about \$45,000 which will cover the employment of a fire coordinator, a clerk-typist, and the purchase of office equipment, expenses, and training material.

HALF OF EACH community's share of the cost would be based on population, the rest on property values, Deadman says. The minimum charge for any community would be three per cent of the total budget.

Any partner would be able to pull out of the association by a vote of its city council or township board.

Deadman said that an existing mutual aid program with these cities and towns is inadequate because of lack of coordination.

"We're not sure who's on the way when you ask for mutual aid, and there's no provision for backup," he explained.

All fire fighting would still be under the control of the local fire chief, he said.

Councilman Alton Bennett was assured that an effort would be made to standardize equipment among the participating communities. Deadman also proposed that the city's recently built fire training tower and classroom facility at the new department of public works site could be offered for use in the joint effort.

"Since these facilities were acquired at no cost to the city (the project was federally funded), we would propose that they be offered for use by the Aracoma Fire Service Cooperative without charge," Deadman said.

Reimbursement would be necessary only for actual out-of-pocket expenses, he added.

Deadman believes the cooperative is particularly important in preparing for fires in large buildings such as shopping centers, apartment houses and schools.

"No jurisdiction is able to cope with a multi-alarm fire in any one of these complexes without the aid of the area fire departments," he said.

THE COOPERATIVE proposal is an outgrowth of a Public Services Administration study which said that fire-fighting service was inadequate in southwest Oakland County.

The approach was recommended over several choices including consolidation of fire departments, which was determined to be politically unfeasible and too expensive. Total cost for consolidation would have been \$7.5 million, according to the study.

The City of Farmington now employs public safety officers, who do double duty as police and firefighters. Farmington Hills depends on a basically volunteer fire department with a full-time chief.

Under the proposed cooperative, a board of trustees would be formed—the Southeastern Oakland County Fire Service Cooperative. Each community would have one board member who would be either the fire chief or his designee.

The fire service coordinator's job would end in 18-24 months under current plans. However, the board would have the authority to keep the coordinator on.

"That's a decision to be made down the road," Deadman said.

South end residents speak out

By STEVE BARNABY

Farmington editor

Farmington Hills' Section 38 residents came out in force this week to let their political leaders know how they want federal funds spent to fight neighborhood blight.

The city council is debating how to spend a \$438,000 Community Development Grant for 1978-79. The first of two public hearings was conducted Monday for south end residents. The next hearing will be Feb. 20.

In contrast to last year's hearing which drew a blank in attendance, this week's session brought more than 50 residents.

Drainage, paving, housing rejuvenation, recreation and crime were among items residents thought should be addressed.

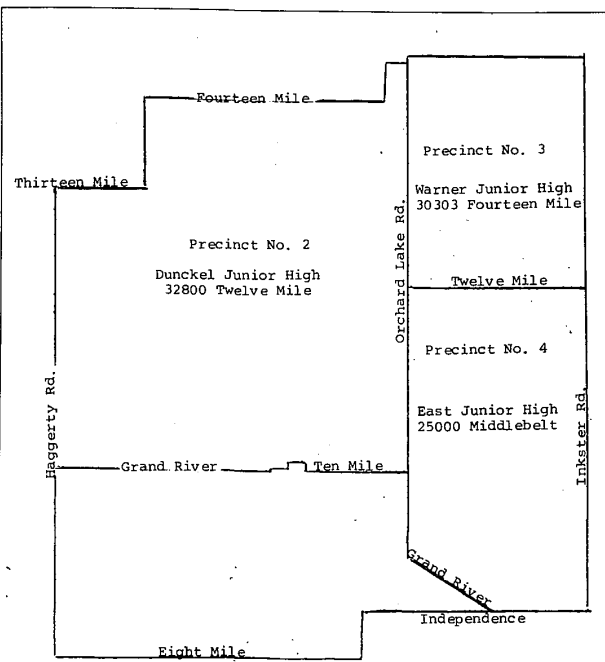
In past years, the city has used the funds for installing the Waldron and Southeast storm sewer drains and loans and grants for upgrading housing.

THE FUNDING MAY be used for preservation and rehabilitation of recreation areas, public works improvements, drainage, home improvement and traffic and light fixture improvement.

The money has been directed at the southeast, a low-income housing area, in compliance with federal guidelines. The southeast is bounded by Nine Mile on the north, Eight Mile on the south, Inkster on the east and Drake on the west.

The Rev. James Wright, of St. Alexander Roman Catholic Church, whose parish serves that area, said more than fixing sewers and houses was needed.

(Continued on page 2A)



Farmington School District officials have designated new polling places for Precincts No. 3 and 4. Precinct No. 3 voters, who formerly voted at Eagle Elementary School, will cast their ballots at Warner Junior High, 30303 Fourteen Mile. Precinct No. 4 voters, who voted at Middlebelt Elementary School, will vote at East Junior High, 25000 Middlebelt.

District wants renewal

4 mills rest with voters

By LYNN ORR

Forget the Valentine cards and candy.

Farmington School District officials are hoping voters will express their appreciation of public education by saying "Yes" to a special four mill renewal election next week.

More than \$2 million hinges on whether school district voters continue their habit of never turning down a renewal.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 14 for the special election. A majority of "yes" votes will continue four mills for operations for another 10 years.

The renewal would not increase taxes, said Supt. Lewis Schulman. The district is asking voters to continue paying four mills originally approved in 1968.

"It would be absolutely a disaster if it's denied," Schulman said, adding that he doesn't expect voters to withdraw their support.

Taxpayers pay \$1 per mill on each \$100 of assessed value on property within the school district. Each mill currently generates about \$45,000 for the district.

Last April, 68 per cent of the voters approved a four mill renewal.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS remind voters

in Precincts 3 and 4 that the polling places have changed. Precinct 3 voters, who formerly voted at Eagle Elementary School, will vote at Warner Junior High, 30303 Fourteen Mile.

Precinct 4 voters, who formerly voted at Middlebelt School, will vote at East Junior High, 25000 Middlebelt.

Voters will be using the punch card

"We apologize for saying we're on the edge of disaster, but that's where we are."

-Supt. Lewis Schulman

voting system for the first time in a school election.

The district now levies 35.88 mills for operations and 3.8 mills for debt retirement each year.

The 1977-78 school budget is about \$26 million. William Prisk, assistant superintendent of finance, estimates next year's budget will increase by about \$1 million.

The district's financial woes increase the importance of the renewal, Prisk says.

"The condition in which we end this year will have an effect on next year. If it's deficit, it makes the renewal even more important," he says.

Prisk recently cautioned the school board that a \$175,000 deficit could be forthcoming in December.

While fuel costs are coming in on target or below estimates, salaries and unpaid sick days are costing the district more than originally projected, he said.

"There's no way to elaborate on the seriousness of the need for this renewal," he said.

Officials expect they will have to increase next year's budget, despite the fact that Farmington is expected to at least match last year's student loss of 665 students.

LOSS OF students means a decrease in state aid, while expenditures, including salaries, fuel costs, and contractual obligations, will increase, Prisk adds.

"We apologize for saying we're on the edge of disaster, but that's where we are," Schulman said. The district has been prudent in closing schools and curtailing expansion to hold the budget in line, he added.

"Despite our school district's attempts to keep up with cutting costs, we're still running into the funding problem," said Donald Cowan, Fairview Elementary School principal and member of the millage committee. Cowan's school will be closed this June.

Hills meetings

Farmington Hills meetings for the month of February are:

•Planning Commission (preliminary hearing): 8 p.m., in council chambers, Hills City Hall.
•City Council (public hearing): 7:30 p.m., Feb. 13, in council chambers.

•Farmington Area Arts Commission: 7 p.m., Feb. 14, in Farmington City Hall.

•Planning Commission (public hearing): 8 p.m., Feb. 16, in council chambers.

•City Council: 8 p.m., Feb. 20, in council chambers.

•Board of Appeals: 8 p.m., Feb. 21, in council chambers.

•City Council: 8 p.m., Feb. 27, in council chambers.

•Commission on Aging: 7:30 p.m., Feb. 28, in Farmington City Hall.

•Industrial and Economic Development Commission: 8 p.m., Feb. 28, in council chambers.

Some meetings are subject to change or rescheduling.

Library hosts Valentine's Day

Rumpelstiltskin will visit the Farmington Community Library as part of its Valentine Family Story Hour at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 14.

This year's featured entertainment will be a marionette production of the fairy tale favorite, "Rumpelstiltskin," given by the children's librarian Sylvia Marabate.

Ms. Marabate learned puppetry while working for the Baltimore County Library.

Call 563-0300 for the Thursday Feb. 9 program at the Farmington Hills Library or 474-7770 for the Feb. 14 program at the Farmington branch library. Both programs will begin at 7:30 p.m.

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TABLE SOLD IMMEDIATELY

William Matthews said he could have sold 20 ping pong tables from the response he received from this classified ad. "Everything was sold right away!"

PING PONG table, \$20. 7 ft. table with rubber balls for sale from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your home with cash or check.

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