

Farmington Observer

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Marathon meeting marks senior citizen win

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Farmington editor

Senior citizen housing came a step closer for Farmington Hills residents this week.

In a 4-3 split decision, the Hills council Monday night introduced a proposal to rezone a 10-acre business site for senior citizen housing. Final approval will be considered at next week's meeting.

In a public hearing lasting until 2:30 a.m., residents, developers and council members debated the \$8.5 million project. The first phase calls for construction of a six-story, 218-unit senior citizen complex on the west side of Orchard Lake south of Fourteen Mile.

The rezoning request was made by Bud Cline of Multi-Rise Associates and landowner Mel Rausenhaus, a local developer.

IF GIVEN final approval next week, the rezoning would be the first under the new RCE-1 designation, which allows for construction of senior citizen housing up to 60 feet high.

Voting for the rezoning this week were council members Cathy Jones, Earl Oppenheimer, Joanne Smith and Mayor Jan Dolan. Opposed were Joe Alkateeb, Keith Deacon and Joanne Soronen.

Deacon had voted against implementation of the RCE-1 zoning ordinance last year. Alkateeb and Soronen, elected after RCE-1 designation was voted into law, campaigned against it.

Meanwhile, a homeowners' group is

moving to have the proposal put on the November ballot. Also, a court case has been started by some homeowners in an attempt to prohibit the city from approving any RCE-1 designations until after the election.

MRS. SMITH and Alkateeb argued the issue at Monday night's meeting after hearing more than 20 residents, most of whom were against the RCE-1 zoning change.

Mrs. Smith defended the rent to be charged in the complex. Cline said

rent would be \$350 a month, with an additional \$200 a month charged to each resident for food and medical care.

"We didn't say that all the senior citizen housing had to be subsidized. This ordinance was passed for the benefit of all the people," Mrs. Smith said.

"Just because a person has money doesn't mean that person doesn't deserve care."

She also derided the attempt to put the matter to a public vote, saying the council deals with too many zoning ordinances to have them put on the ballot.

But Alkateeb protested Smith's logic in supporting the zoning change.

"I disagree with Mrs. Smith that the ordinance wasn't intended to aid the underprivileged," he said.

Alkateeb said one of the arguments made by Housing Commissioner Tom Czubak in defense of the ordinance

was that it would help poor senior citizens.

"This plan is a luxury hotel for the elderly," he said.

Many people at the hearing said a high-rise building would change the community's personality. Alkateeb defended that reasoning.

"No one has the right to deny the people of Farmington Hills their destiny and how they live," he said.

"They want a bedroom community. If they want a Sleepy Hollow, that is what they are going to get."

Alkateeb disagreed with Cline's argument that a high-rise was good for security of the elderly residents.

"I deserve security, too, but I can't build up my house any higher," Alkateeb said.

He supported the move to put the RCE-1 issue on the ballot, saying it would have such a great impact on the community that the voters should decide.

Farmington seeks funds for roads

The City of Farmington will spend \$40,000 in community development funds next year, if its grant application is approved.

The 1978-79 program is a continuation of last year's program when the city was granted about \$40,000.

Road repair, housing rehabilitation, and redevelopment of the Central Business District (CBD) remain community development priorities, City Mgr. Robert Deadman said.

Grant application approval is expected in July or August.

Late notice from Oakland County prevented local public hearings about the funding, he explained.

"Although the county hopes that the community will make every effort to involve local residents in the development of our local community development plan and budget request, it has established a timetable which does not allow for community participation," he explained.

Deadman received notification Feb. 3 that the grant applications were due at the county office by Feb. 15.

"There wasn't time to even review the proposed grant application with city council prior to submitting it," Deadman said.

"The council can amend the application, he added.

ALL OF THE grant applications and projects submitted by local governments, which are sub-agents, will be reviewed by the county, consolidated into a single request, and submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The county will hold public hearings on the consolidated grant application before submitting it to HUD.

About \$15,000 of the funds will be used to upgrade roads within Floral Park subdivision, Deadman said.

"It would appear that this is the only major subdivision in the city which has moderate housing, we may be able to qualify a road repair project in this subdivision.

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Strange meeting you here

That seems to be this flamingo's reaction to the presence of Santa Claus at this late date in February. But then, look who is calling the kettle black. What's a flamingo doing standing in the snow? The strange encounter can be viewed on Middlebelt, north of Nine Mile. (Staff photo by Harry Mantle)

Residents fear high-rise glut

Most residents testifying before Farmington Hills City Council this week protested a zoning change to allow construction of a six-story senior citizen housing complex.

While the council approved the zoning change on the 10-acre parcel at Orchard Lake south of Fourteen Mile, residents feared the community would be deluged by high-rise buildings.

At question is the first request for development under the RCE-1 designation, which would allow senior citizen housing up to 60 feet high.

Much of the opposition came from subdivisions surrounding the proposed site.

Mike Rolnick said the zoning put the city, its residents and council members in a dilemma.

"We are all committed to helping the elderly. But we are considering a high-rise structure here. It could change the residential character of the community," he said.

Rolnick said the community was being sold a bill of goods by developers who claim high-rise buildings are the only way to provide housing for senior citizens.

He questioned whether senior citizens could afford the rent—\$350 a month plus \$200 a month for food and medical care for each resident of the proposed 218-unit structure.

"What happens to an elderly person if, after they move in, they can no longer afford the rent?" he asked.

The location, he said, also was inappropriate because, although on a main thoroughfare, it was far away from food stores. The complex would be located across the street from Knart, however, the nearest supermarket is a mile away.

Robert Anzlov, president of the Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills, also protested the zoning change.

"Once this precedent is established, how do we defend the rest of the city?" he asked.

"I expect several other proposals will come down this strip if this is passed," he said.

Anzlov asked the council to withhold approval of any RCE-1 designations until residents can vote on the issue.

The Council of Homeowners has collected 2,000 signatures on a petition calling for a public vote on both the RCE-1 zoning designation and RCE, which has a 30-foot height limit.

City attorneys are questioning the legality of a ballot question covering two issues.

Bud Schultz, a Meadow Hills subdivision resident, expressed fears the senior citizen complex could be used to house residents other than the elderly.

"I urge you to delay approval until an analysis is made of this situation," he said.

Farmington Hills resident Norbert Morson said the building would be incompatible with housing in the area.

"I would look upon this differently if it was an RCE proposal or if the program was subsidized," he said.

Under this proposal, renters in the complex would not receive aid from the federal government. Other senior housing projects include subsidized rents.

George Stone urged the Hills council to take a lesson from surrounding cities, such as Southfield, where high-rises have proliferated.

But while many residents lashed out at the intent of developers, Max Sheldon defended them.

"Who has developed Farmington Hills but the developers?" he asked.

"The real estate industry provides housing for America. We must make room for the next generation," he said.

'Wait until dark,' residents concur

Fear of being left in the dark by a possible coal shortage caused by the miners' strike has yet to hit Farmington area shoppers.

While a few admitted to preparing to make life comfortable in the event utility companies' coal supplies make it difficult to supply electricity to customers, most shoppers were adopting a wait-and-see attitude.

"It's a possibility," said Verna Reader, of Livonia, about the blackouts.

Life without electricity has posed varying degrees of threat to shoppers.

"It's no big deal. I'll exist for a couple of hours," said Mrs. Reader.

Karen Kanninen, of Farmington, took a different view of the matter.

"They can't do that. They won't let people suffer like that," she said of the blackouts.

Death has its place in the attitude of many shoppers.

Skiing duo win medals

Jill Robins and Lisa Williams of Farmington left a three day alpine event at Sugarloaf Village with bronze and silver medals for their skiing abilities.

Mrs. Robins was awarded a silver and three bronze medals. Ms. Williams won a bronze medal for her performance down the 400 foot vertical slope. She competed against 40 junior alpine competitors from Michigan.

"I DON'T know if it will happen," said Mrs. Gerda Gross, of Farmington Hills. "But we did a little to prepare for it. We were concerned about the sump pump, so we bought something to keep it running."

While a few persons were taking the issue in stride, they tried to consider the plight of the striking miners.

"I kind of think the strikers will stay on strike. I think we're going to have to readjust our lives," said Mrs. Robert Fanning, of Farmington Hills.

"I can see two sides to the question. I'm in favor of the strikers because I think of what they get paid in comparison to the salaries of other professions," she said.

"On the other hand, it's an injustice to the other people to have to live with the blackouts," she said.

Striking miners should stay out of work until the last possible moment, according to Mark Noble of Detroit.

"After 90 days, it will be summer and no one will listen then about the blackouts," he said.

He saw little chance that the black-out periods would go into effect.

"THERE'S a lot of pressure on them to go back to work," he said.

"All the rich people are going to start talking to them (the coal miners), maybe hit them a couple of times," he said.

There might be power blackouts, but Noble believes that will happen only a few times.



JERRY MYCEK



ANNE WEINRAUCH

Others are hoping that there will be a way to avoid the blackouts.

"Maybe they'll get out of the strike before the utility companies have to do that," said Anne Weinrauch, of Farmington.

"I don't go along with that," said Jerry Mycek, of the blackout possibility. "If people cut down I think it will be OK."

In spite of the threat of a blackout, Esper supports the miners' right to strike.

"It's their right to strike. I don't see anything wrong with it," he said.

Out and out disbelief was evident among some shoppers.

"It's like everything else. They try to psych you out. All they're going to do is sell more candles," said Cindy Wartloff, of Novi.

"It all seems like a bunch of baloney to me," said Emily Matusek, who works in Farmington.

WHILE OTHERS tended to doubt the existence of a energy crisis, Jerry Mycek, of Farmington Hills, was convinced that blackouts would occur.

"I really think so, probably because I've been a Christian all my life, since I was seven. And I believe that God is chastizing the world. The last days are coming," he said.

Jury duty rules are simplified

Prospective jurors in Oakland County will be required to show up for jury duty for one day.

Under a new law, jurors who are assigned to a case during their first day serve for the duration of that trial.

If a juror goes unassigned, he can return home.

The law is designed to cut down court costs by limiting the number of times a juror is required to appear.

Under the existing system, persons

can be put on jury duty for a month at a time and must appear in court each day to check if they're assigned to a trial. Jurors are paid for their time.

The new law would also phase out exemptions for jury duty made under the current law for doctors, lawyers and government officials.

Jury selection would be based on a person's general ability to serve as a juror, regardless of his occupation.

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