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Twenty Five Cents

A surprise move

By RON GARBINSKI

In a move that surprised many employees at the Hamilton International Corporation, the Farmington Hills-based firm announced last week that it will sell all interest in its wholly owned subsidiary, Alexander Life Insurance Company of America.

An insurance subsidiary of the Household Finance Corporation, Hamilton International, a letter of intent last Monday revealing it would pay \$28.75 million in cash for the local insurance firm.

Also included in the deal is a provision that will allow Hamilton International to retain 140 acres, presently owned by the Hamilton Life Insurance Co. on the island of St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. Book value of the property is \$3 million and has been up for sale since 1971, when Hamilton halted construction of a resort on the island.

While both companies formalized the agreement last week, its approval is subject to a majority vote by the stockholders of Hamilton International Corp., a holding company for Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. of St.

Louis Inc. and the Hamilton Life Insurance Co.

"THE AGREEMENT is up to the stockholders," said Vernon Lunn, a spokesman for Hamilton International. "If they cast their approval, then the agreement will be finalized."

Approval also depends on the insurance commissioners of Michigan. They must review the transaction to make sure everything is proper. Only then can the agreement be made. They have to look at a lot of facts and figures first."

While Lunn was unable to give the exact reason for the transaction, he said the move might have resulted because Hamilton Life is a subsidiary of Hamilton International and that it was somewhat difficult for the subsidiary to get money from its parent company.

"Hamilton Life has an excellent record. It hasn't had any problems over the years and a recent inquiry made to the state insurance commissioner reveals that the insurance company is very healthy," Lunn continued.

The change of ownership won't result in

any drastic alterations in Hamilton Life's normal customer relations or insurance services.

Household Finance, a Chicago-based firm dealing in rental, manufacturing and merchandising businesses, reported that it will keep the insurance company a state domestic operation, retaining its present name and employees.

"FOR HAMILTON Life, this meant it will now have the cash and property. That, in effect, means the company really has \$28 million in assets," Lunn said. "What it does with that money depends on how the

stockholders vote on the deal in the next few weeks.

Presently, Hamilton has no definite plans for the cash. Alexander Hamilton Life is the insurance underwriter for Dun and Bradstreet Trust and has received policyholders' recommendations from A.M. Best Company, insurance industry analysts.

Life insurance in force increased to \$1,283 billion in 1975 as compared to \$1,278 billion in 1974. Group insurance in force in 1975 was \$99 million and \$107.3 million in 1974.

Fire stations costs doubling after contract confusion

By LOUISE ORLUTSKY

The Farmington Hills city administration, which estimated the construction cost of its fire station at \$50,000, has spent \$100,000 on the uncompleted station.

"We're trying to keep the cost down to \$100,000," Michael Dornan, Hills Citizens Services aide, said.

Construction of the station at Middlebelt and Vliet, has been delayed in recent

ing material and by the resignation of the original architect-supervisor midway through the project.

Paul Nemer, the original architect moved to Houston after submitting his design, even though his contract included supervision of the project.

The Hills reluctantly paid Nemer for his services. "We didn't want to pay him anything at all," Dornan said. "I feel he didn't give us a fair deal."

Richard Gould, a Hills resident and a neighbor of the new fire station, replaced Nemer. He is concerned that this project will come off successfully, Dornan said.

The Grand Blanc Block Co., which supplies the project with fluted blocks, went on strike.

THE SPECIALLY colored brown blocks make up the corners of the building, Dornan explained.

"We had received delivery of some of the blocks with a specific color. We couldn't find matching blocks elsewhere, so we had to wait until after a recent strike by block workers to finish the corners of the building."

There was a six-week delay in obtaining the structural steel work from the steel plant, he said. He didn't know the cause of the delay.

Although some site work was done before this year, the footings weren't poured until March. The new fire station No. 2 is scheduled to be completed by winter.

The station will replace the one on North-western and will service the northeast section of the city. Hills Fire Chief John Van De Vort said.

"The new station will be more centrally located," he said.

Although it will be larger than the existing facility, it won't be luxurious, he added.

"Now, we're renting a facility in North-western (Highway), at the tail end of a garage building," Van De Vort said.

The new station is basic, according to Van De Vort. "It barely meets the needs of the department. It wasn't designed for reserve equipment."

"You do what you can with the money available," he added.

The new Middlebelt station will be large enough for its force to conduct training sessions in back of the station.

The station will have a licensed ambulance unit between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m. on weekdays and during the day on weekends.

During weekdays, the unit will operate from Fire Station Four at Twelve Mile between Farmington and Drake Roads. The unit services the northern section of the Hills, from Inland Road to Saginaw and from Eleven to Fourteen Mile, he said.



I wonder

Farmington Observer & Eccentric staff member Ron Garbinski was one of those curious to know how readers felt. To see the results of our reader survey, turn to page 3-A. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

New finance chief seeks challenge of innovation

By RON GARBINSKI

Giard Miller considers himself a fiscal innovator.

He likes to brainstorm and involve himself totally in decision-making while exploring the feasibility of any new financial method.

As Farmington Hills' new 25-year-old finance director, he's all about. Since taking over the fiscal reins of the city last month, he already has begun to develop and implement several programs.

"His primary concern is to establish financial policies and procedures for the city so his office can increase accountability over other department's spending."

"Right now I'm trying to sort out some of the old conflicts that existed between departments before I arrived," said the former township administrator of West Windsor, N.J.

"Over the next couple months, I'll be working with (City Manager) George Mason, preparing an administrative unit procedure manual. This will be a big step in the city's fiscal control policy because it never had one before."

ANOTHER MAJOR fiscal control was implemented recently when the city council approved a budget amendment. The new ordinance says a department must receive approval from the council before it can exceed its annual budget.

"This is a substantial change in operation. As the city settles down from its transition into a city, the need for fiscal control will become more and more evident," Miller explained.

"And the city needs these controls because without them, the budget becomes nothing but a paper document."

Before coming to Farmington Hills, Miller served as chief administrative officer for the Township of Windsor, Princeton Township's assistant municipal manager for two years.

"The experience he gained in these positions, he said, will help him cope with city problems in areas other than accounting."

"While my responsibility will be for the treasury and financial functions of the city, I also am experienced in a number of other administrative areas outside of finance," Miller added.



GIARD MILLER

"The city's financial picture is influenced by what happens in all these other areas. That's one reason why we need stability in the finance department," he said.

WHILE MILLER said his department is considering several new ideas, most of the investigation is exploratory work to see if the methods will prove worthwhile in Farmington Hills.

One idea is the possible pooling of investment funds.

He is studying the advisability of pooling the city's assets and investing those funds on a long-term basis to make money for the city.

He isn't certain yet and a decision hasn't been reached on the issue, but he says ideas like that can help improve the financial standing of the city.

Miller, with the help of other department heads, is looking at special assessments to see if the city can combine several of them to secure lower interest rates from major lending banks.

"I'd also like to examine the possibility of getting a bond rating for the city," said the former honors scholar at Syracuse University's Maxwell Graduate School of Public Affairs.

"The city hasn't any real general obligation debt, so it never really had a general

bond rating. In the past, the city usually had enough cash on hand to pay back bonds when they matured," Miller explained.

Reviewing the Farmington Hills financial set-up, Miller said the city is in "real good fiscal condition."

"I HAVE a good staff in this department and the city's finances are improving yearly. While my three major responsibilities include accounting, budget and control, I hope to get involved in various other governmental functions," he continued.

"And with competent heads at all department levels, it shouldn't be too hard to work with everyone else."

With Congress approving the new public works job bill, Miller claimed the city can qualify for more federal funds through programs like SARTA. These are substantial revenue sources for the community, he said.

Peering from behind his wire-rimmed glasses, Miller emphasized that his personal goal as finance director is to establish a good working relationship with the community.

"Farmington Hills is in great shape. It's not like a lot of other cities around the country. The way I see it, politics hasn't entered city government. And that's one of the factors that drew me here from New Jersey," he said.

"I'm concerned about the loss of integrity and credibility in government. With this in mind, I hope to maintain the integrity of finance and cash management in the Hills," he concluded.

City man manages Hudson's Westland

Byron A. Turquist, of Farmington, was appointed general manager of J.L. Hudson Company's Westland store. He had been general manager of the Portage store.

Turquist joined the company in 1967 and worked in sales and sales supervision. In 1969, he became an executive trustee.

He was a buyer, store manager and general manager of the Midwest Trouser Exchange.

Sidewalk delay perturbing to Baptist Manor seniors

By YVONNE B. DEVLIN

Fear of being hit by a car or, at least, a spray of gravel haunts the senior citizens from Detroit Baptist Manor whenever they walk up Thirteenth Mile to Orchard Lake Road, according to Verna Crowley, a 66-year-old resident.

There isn't any sidewalk extending from the Manor to the shopping district at Thirteenth Mile and Orchard Lake Road and many of the senior citizens are forced to walk along the gravel shoulder with their shopping carts.

Farmington Hills zoning codes say that a passing lane must be built on Thirteenth Mile before the sidewalk can be built, according to James Fahrenkrug, who is on the lobbying committee of North Farmington Baptist Church.

"The estimated cost for building the lane is \$40,000 and the Manor doesn't have the funds," he said.

"In order to build anything in Farmington Hills, a permit must be applied for and this time it has been held back until the passing lane is built," said Fahrenkrug.

Glen Oaks, a country club across the street, never had to put in a passing lane because they never wanted to build a sidewalk, according to Fahrenkrug.

Things are being held up by those who control the building permits, he added.

There is a partial sidewalk that extends across the front of the Manor property, but it "begins and ends nowhere," according to Dr. Howard Heyworth, the executive director of the Manor.

"The Manor wouldn't give us a certificate of occupancy unless we put a sidewalk across the front. It cost us \$3,000 and goes nowhere unless the city says," he commented.

must rely on volunteers to drive them. But the volunteers aren't always available and some people are forced to walk, he said.

"I don't drive and I used to walk. I won't any more because I don't relish the thought of being smashed up by an oncoming car," said Ms. Crowley.

Drivers are not looking for pedestrians in the suburbs, she said. They are geared for cars and not for someone walking along the road.

"It's only by the grace of God that someone hasn't been hit," she added.

Rose Soornian, 73, walks to the intersection three or four times a week to go shopping.

"I'm afraid to walk because it's so dangerous. To get away from the cars, I walk on the grass," said Ms. Soornian.

"Sometimes the grass is wet and I may slip."

The doctor has prescribed for Ms. Soornian to walk everyday, and she said that

it's pleasant to combine the shopping and walking.

"If I walk, I'll usually go about 10 to 30 minutes because the traffic is light," said Marian Lepley, 79.

There isn't a pedestrian light or crosswalk at the intersection, and Ms. Crowley sees this as a double jeopardy with persons turning on the red lights.

"I haven't walked lately because I'm not sure of the right-hand turners," said Ms. Lepley.

"I'd live on bread and water now before I'd walk up there again," said Ms. Crowley.

In their efforts to help lobby for the sidewalk, North Farmington Baptist Church has run up against a wall of red tape, according to the Rev. Stan Nicol.

"The final word was from Mayor Keith Deacon who told us we needed to write a letter to the city council to get it on the agenda," he said.

Meanwhile the senior citizens continue to walk along the shoulder.

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The state legislature has just backed out a bill that would make criminals pay the bill against their victims. To see the details turn to Page 2A.