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Twenty Five Cents

Hills launches \$1 million rebate bonanza

Former owners disgruntled

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Some former Farmington Hills property owners may find out that all that glitters isn't gold.

The Farmington Hills City Council has voted to pay \$1 million in rebates to property owners presently holding title to land which was taxed for water and sewer bonds between 1963-67.

City Finance Director Girard Miller said at this week's council meeting that his office already was receiving phone calls from disgruntled persons who actually paid the assessment but have since sold the property.

Even though the previous property owners may have actually paid the special assessment, they won't receive even one red cent.

Payments will begin on December 1 to those property owners who hold title to an estimated 4,700 parcels of land in the Hills. Although voting to pay the rebate, Councilman Earl Oppenheimer expressed reservations.

"WHAT IS THE EQUITY in returning the funds to the present property owners when it was the former property owners who paid the assessment," he asked. Miller told the council the question, by law, already is settled.

"I share Councilman Oppenheimer's concern. But the state law and the city charter says the funds should go to the owner of record," said Miller.

The first phase of the program will involve the release of \$800,000 net fund balances to 3,400 parcels. Those funds will be paid in the December installment, according to the city administration.

The second phase of the program, presently scheduled for 1977-78, will involve release of an additional \$200,000 of fund balances to another 1,300 parcel owners.

Property owners in 20 of the city's 80 to 85 special assessment districts will be receiving rebate checks of from \$50 to \$500, according to Miller. The average refund will be \$200.

Also out of luck may be those property owners holding a land contract which hasn't been recorded. Payment only will

go to those property owners of record who have been turned up by a title search to be conducted by the Loftis Title Company, of Troy.

The refunds are a result of the city then a township, selling the bonds for sewer and water systems at a lower rate of interest than expected, said Miller.

Also some residents pre-paid the assessments and the city reinvested the money at a higher rate. Part of the construction surplus also was due to construction costs being lower than the city estimated, said Miller.

PAYMENT WILL BE MADE strictly in the results of the title search, said administration officials.

If there is disagreement on land contract holders it will have to be solved between them in court, said City Attorney Terry Brennan.

Those property owners who have been paying in installments will receive a credit.

The rebate came about because the city has passed the break even point on the bonds. The surplus exceeds what property owners still owe the city for construction.

By law the city isn't required to refund the money until the bonds come due in three or four years, according to Miller. But the council's vote to approve payment and launch the title search assures the beginning of the payments.

Statistics spur drinking hearing

Recent statistics released by the Michigan State Police alleging that alcohol-related auto accidents are on the increase among the 18-20 year old age bracket has prompted the Farmington Hills City Council to call a public hearing on the issue.

Councilmember Joanne Smith called for the public hearing on Sept. 20 urging residents in those age groups to give their views on whether or not the legal drinking age should be raised back to 21.

"We are talking about something that is a terribly important issue for young persons and parents, both," she said at this week's council session.

Presently, four bills are being considered by state legislators to hike the age back to 21 as it was in 1971.

"It seems that some people are saying we'll let you vote but not drink. On the other hand, we allow older persons to drink but they don't even care to vote," she said.

THE OTHER COUNCIL members agreed a hearing should be conducted to aid the council in formulating a recommendation to the state's lawmakers. Announcements will be made in the high schools for students to let their views be known. Also representatives from the two city social agencies will be invited—Farmington Area Advisory Council (FAAC) and the Farmington Youth Assistance (FYA).

State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington) is conducting a survey to determine how area residents feel about the present legal drinking age.

Brotherton, in a news letter to his constituents, is asking residents to lower the drinking age may have been faulty.

"The trend seems to be going in the opposite direction as more and more state legislators are reflecting that they did not do the teen-agers any favors when they lowered the age to 18," he said.

Possibly, they might have done the youth a great disservice in view of the facts that have been revealed in Michigan studies since the drinking age was lowered.

According to Brotherton studies reveal that

"Accidents involving those between 18 and 20 who have been drinking have increased by 106.5 per cent. Accidents involving drinking teen-agers under 18 have increased by 116 per cent. Compare those figures to the accident rate among teen-agers who haven't been drinking. For those below 18, the increase was one percent, while the increase for those between 18 and 20 was 3.1 per cent."

"The number of drinking drivers under 18 increased by 116 per cent while the number of drinking drivers between 18 and 20 increased 145 per cent."

"Another problem is the accessibility of alcohol to those under 18. Accident rates and alcoholism rates show that there are many more 18-19 year old drinkers than in 1971."

"In addition, educators and parents have expressed concern about students appearing in school or at school functions under the influence of alcohol. Incidents of alcohol abuse among younger students are reaching epidemic proportions because of the trickle down effect of the drinking at 18 law."

"THESE FACTS INDICATE that perhaps Michigan lawmakers should turn the clock backwards and admit they might have made an error in public policy," said Brotherton.

Opponents to increasing the legal drinking age say that the statistics are comparing apples to oranges and are weighed unfavorably against the teen-age driver.

Opponents also say that it is unfair to give 18 year olds the adult privileges and responsibilities of voting and fighting wars and disallow them the right to drink alcoholic beverages.

There has been some question as to whether it was constitutional to give other rights of majority to 18 year olds without extending drinking privileges. However the constitutionality of establishing a high age for legal drinking has been upheld by several court decisions," said Brotherton.

Michigan's attorney general has also ruled that the legislature can raise the drinking age to 21," he said.

Santomauro fills deputy director post

Farmington Police Sgt. John Santomauro, 27, the youngest man in his rank in the department will become its second in command Sept. 1.

Santomauro, who will be promoted to lieutenant, will fill the newly created post of deputy public safety director.

He will oversee the daily operation of patrol duties, traffic control, investigation and act as a liaison officer between Police Chief Daniel Byrnes and officers on the road.

"What I'm immediately going to be doing is improving on what we have," said Santomauro, a seven-year veteran of the department.

"Training is an important part of what we have here. I want to improve the in-service training of the department. I want the officers to participate even more in the community."

IMPRESSED BY A SEMINAR in Detroit, which was conducted by members of the London Metropolitan police system, he wants to build greater unity between the department and the community.

"I was greatly impressed by the strong unity between the police and the population in England," he remarked.

"I think it would be great if we established beat cops in the city. But you have to work within your budget. A mobile unit can cover more territory than a beat cop," he said.

He believes the department has established a pattern of "consistent enforcement" which helped it to patrol the parks in the area.

"The problem with the kids on the street isn't the greatest problem. It's something that's handled on a one to one basis between the officer and the kid on the street," he said.

Santomauro helped to establish the



SGT. JOHN SANTOMAURO

city's police reserve unit, composed of civilian volunteers. He wrote the unit's manual and established its ranking.

Farmington waived the age limit of its patrolmen to allow the then 20-year-old Santomauro to join the department in 1968. He was promoted to sergeant two years later.

"He's probably the youngest sergeant in the department," Byrnes said. "He's got a dynamic personality."

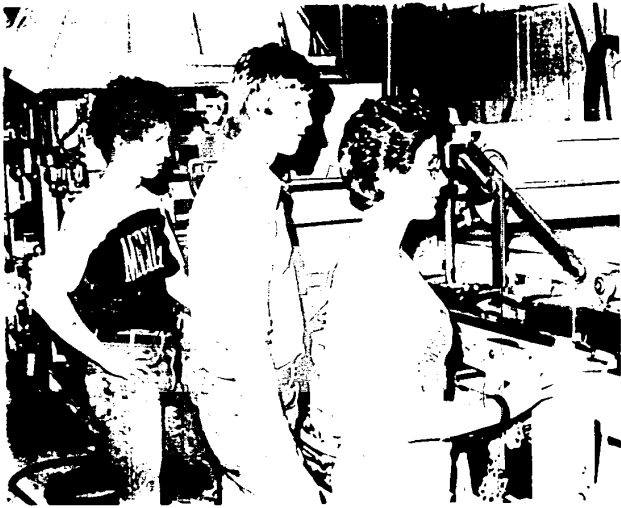
"He's reorganized the reserves and upgraded its professionalism," he said. "He was a driving force behind the reserve program, three or four years ago."

A resident of the Hills, Santomauro will receive a BA in police administration from Madonna College this fall.

"It's tough to find the time," he said. "But you don't get nothing for nothing."

He joined the Farmington police department after his discharge from the Marines.

"I was a sergeant in the infantry in Vietnam," he said. "I had an offer to go to officers' training school. But there was a war on at the time and I decided not to go."



Planning a career

Richard Combs of Farmington (left) and Scott Christy of Farmington Hills joined Daine Krumweide of Pontiac recently to watch the four-drummer papermaking machine in Western Michigan University's paper science and engineering department facilities during a week-

long science career program. The three students were part of a group of 52 top-level high school seniors who actually made paper and engaged in other laboratory exercises at WSU under the sponsorship of the Paper Technology Foundation at the college.

Northwestern impact study

Consultant issue poses problems

The Northwestern Citizens Advisory Committee debated this week the merits of hiring one, two or three consultants to gather information about the impact of the proposed extension of Northwestern Highway.

There are some problems with the two consultant approach," said Edward Kazenko, of the Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation.

Administratively it's a nightmare. It could be the downfall of this committee," he continued.

He recommended hiring a third consultant to coordinate the work of the others. There would be some duplication of effort with the involvement of a third consultant who is primarily dancing between the other two.

The group has the option of hiring one consultant who would hire two others to help gather the information. "The consultant usually brings in a firm that is knowledgeable in an area where he is not," Kazenko explained. "I don't think we're going to find one single consultant that could handle everything."

EVEN WITH three consultants he said there would still be some subcontracting of other consultants.

We need a strong hand guiding the study," said Walker L. Coker, the group's chairman. "There may be duplication of effort or you'll have three sides to the question."

You gain more control with one consultant," said John Makris of the Audubon Society. "But whoever pays the bill will look out. OK, we'll do it that way."

The consultants to the group will study the impact of the highway on traffic flow, development and the environment in the affected area.

The technical advisory committee defined the area of the impact study as extending from Southfield in the southeast corner to Commerce Township in the northwest corner.

The general study area included West Bloomfield, Farmington Hills, Franklin Village, Southfield and Commerce Township.

The project is expected to cost about \$88.3 million, nearly double of the \$43 million estimated cost of three years ago.

Kazenko estimates the consultants' fees to cost about \$95,000. "It doesn't actually double or triple if we use two or three consultants," he said.

Data collection involves large amounts of money. It involves digging out reams and reams of data. Its cost doesn't reflect its importance," Kazenko said.

MAKRIS HAD pointed out that the cost of the analysis would account for 15 per cent of the project cost.

About \$61.7 million has been earmarked for the highway's construction, \$17.5 million for purchasing the rights of way, and \$9.3 million has been set aside in a contingency fund.

The federal urban fund, which was programmed for the extension of Northwestern Highway, is expected to yield \$16.3 million for the project. Each city through which the highway will be constructed will pay 12.5 per cent of the construction costs. Only cities with populations of more than 5,000 are expected to be billed for a percentage of the costs.

Farmington Hills, which could be included in the cities footing a percentage of the costs, isn't included by the state among those areas.

In 1969, when the decision was made to bid the cities, Farmington Hills' population wasn't more than 5,500.

It's not known if Farmington Hills will eventually be included on the lists of paying cities, according to Kazenko.

Although the state highway department hasn't sought out rights of way to acquire for the project it is buying some land from hardship cases, he said.

The right of way division has purchased six parcels from hardship cases, he said. These include the home of a man who bought property in Florida in anticipation of the highway department purchasing his Michigan home. When the department ceased purchasing he was left with two homes.

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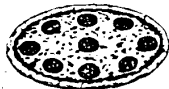
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inside

SOMETHING SPECIAL



ON THE BACK OF YOUR CARRIER RECEIPT

Be sure to save your carrier receipt this month. You can save \$1.00 off the regular price of your next medium or large pizza by presenting it at participating Little Caesars in Wayne and Oakland counties.

Construction

Earth movers and steam shovels do their job on Nine Mile and Shiawassee as road and drainage construction continues through the summer months. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)