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Dust control kicks up public hearing storm

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

While most everyone agrees that a need exists to control dust on unpaved roads, many Farmington Hills residents dispute who should foot the bill.

That was the sentiment at this week's council session, where close to 300 persons turned out to express disapproval of a council plan to assess property owners for five applications of calcium chloride, a dust control agent.

In previous years, the city has paid for the applications through the gas and weight tax allocation. But now, because of increasing maintenance costs, the city administration has requested that the council assess homeowners.

The money saved, according to city officials, would be used for other maintenance duties on both paved and unpaved roads.

After hearing more than two dozen residents testify on the proposed assessment, the council voted 6-1 that a necessity existed for the assessment.

VOTING AGAINST the assessment was Councilman Joe Alkateeb.

And while Alkateeb felt the assessment should be made, he said all persons living on dirt roads should be assessed.

Nearly 40 per cent of persons living on the 90 miles of dirt and gravel roads throughout the city were allowed to avoid the assessment under the stipulation they would find another way to control dust. Many subdivisions hire firms to spread oil on their roads.

"Nobody should be able to opt out," said Alkateeb. "We should vote to cut out the program entirely and let the people do it on their own. Let them see how dusty it will get."

He moved to abolish the program, but the motion was defeated.

Residents have until 4:30 p.m. today to notify city officials that they wish to pull out of the program.

To be exempted from the program, residents along at least 500 linear feet of continuous road must be involved.

Officials estimate that it would cost the average homeowner about \$12 if they owned a 100-foot-wide lot for the five applications. But the city could save as much as \$88,000, which could be used for ditching unpaved roads and adding gravel.

"THE GRAVEL roads require almost twice as much money to maintain as do the paved roads," said City Mgr. George Majors in a letter delivered to 4,000 city residents who live along gravel roads.

"The residents who live on paved local roads have been subsidizing the residents on unpaved roads for dust control," he said.

But gravel road residents weren't in the mood for that logic. The public hearing, which lasted for three hours, was full of shouts, applause, cat-calls and boos as the debate continued.

"The city doesn't even come down our road and grade it," said one angry resident. "Now we're to be charged for chloride. Tomorrow we'll be charged for ditching. All the good

roads are taken care of. But we are the forgotten ones."

Many residents said the cost wasn't the issue, but the philosophy of assessing residents for the service.

Others felt levying an assessment was the city's way to force residents into paving their subdivisions.

A date will be set in the future for a hearing on the cost of the special assessment.

Police warn of con men who prey in the spring

Spring time is prime time for confidence men who prey on the gullible, the easily intimidated or persons who are susceptible to whatever looks like a good deal.

That's the word from area police who advise residents to check the Better Business Bureau, ask for identification and cultivate a healthy dose of skepticism when dealing with door-to-door repairmen or construction firms.

"If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true," advised a Farmington Hills Police official.

Police say the most popular cons play on the victim's sense of duty.

In an area such as Farmington, where many residents have black-topped driveways, bogus construction crews offer to refinish the pavement.

THE door-to-door crew will approach the homeowner and promise to coat the black-topped driveway, sealing cracks and improving its appearance. Instead of resurfacing the drive, the crew will spray diluted petroleum over the area. After it dries, the homeowner realizes that he's dealing with the same old driveway and a depleted bank account.

A variation on the driveway con involves a free inspection of a chimney flue. Of course, the workman finds the flue needs repair and offers an inexpensive solution.

Although the chimney might be in good condition, the crew gives the flashing a new coat of paint. For \$75-100, the homeowner has a shiny chimney flashing and little else.

Roof inspections work in the same way. A crew might offer to inspect the roof since they are in the neighborhood. After checking the roof, the foreman will tell the homeowner that new shingles are needed but offers a less expensive solution.

For several hundred dollars, the man will offer to coat the roof with a new resurfacing material, actually a thin, oil-based solution that will wash off in the rain, according to police.

Another free inspection that often leads to an expensive swindle involves the furnace.

AFTER looking the furnace over, the man will catalog a list of repairs needed. As a favor, he will do the job cheaply. In the end, the man tries to do as little actual work as possible for as much money as he can charge.

A solution to this problem, points out Farmington Police Det. Thomas Daniels, is to check the Better Business

Bureau for complaints against the company.

Checking the city's building department for a record of permits issued to the contractor and inquiring about any problem connected with the firm is another way to discover a company's past business practices, according to Farmington Public Safety Lt. John Santamoro.

If the contractor is doing work valued at more than \$300, the firm must be licensed by the state. Finally, when paying the firm, be sure to obtain a waiver of lien which will help insure that the builder has paid his supplier, according to Santamoro.

"Know who you are doing business with," he advises.

Before hiring a contractor, it is also advisable to ask him for a list of former customers who will discuss the work they had done on their homes. Reputable contractors will give you names of past customers, according to Santamoro.

Con men also pose as utility company employees inspecting equipment.

ONE REASON given for inspecting the homeowner's property is that the utility company is allegedly overcharging the customer and has decided to give him a refund. To do this, the customer is asked to change a large bill for the representative. While the homeowner is looking at the change, the con men grab the valuables and split.

Another con involving bogus utility company representatives has the men checking the homeowner's gas line. The company's records show the line needs repair, at a great cost to the homeowner.

The men offer to do the work on their own for less than the standard fee. If the homeowner agrees, the men show up with pipes and tools and begin to loudly go about their jobs. After they collect their money, the homeowner realizes that they painted his pipes silver and have done little else.

Homeowners can avoid these cons by asking for identification before allowing the men into their homes, police advise.

Utility companies usually refund

overpayment by crediting the account rather than a cash refund.

If the men advise that repairs are needed, call the utility company and ask if it sent out representatives to

(Continued on Page 2A)

Versatility counts

How lawyer mingles in banking world

By LYNN ORR

Most managers know that moving up the corporate ladder requires political savvy.

But most women follow a male-oriented game plan to sit in a president's chair?

Tracy Thompson hopes not. As the sole female senior attorney in National Bank of Detroit's law department, Ms. Thompson is testing traditional management theories by putting her own initiative and skills before politics.

"I approach things analytically. I don't really care who's on one side or another. I want to prove my case based on the law."

As a legal officer, Ms. Thompson's job is two-fold, involving litigation in the courts and in-house regulations. Much of her recent work has involved compliance with federal banking regulations, such as equal credit.

In the traditional friendly antagonism between bankers and lawyers, it's her job to see that the NBD bankers follow the law.

THAT'S NOT as easy as it sounds, she points out.

"I'm against working weekends. I don't see the need for overtime except for special projects. If there's that much work, the company should hire more people."

Bank work has its advantages there as well, and the image of the conservative bank didn't deter her. In fact, she believes women at NBD may be less conservative than the traditional stereotypes—at least in apparel.

Dressed in a dark orange suit with polka-dot blouse and tie, her long blonde hair challenges the conservative model.

But women are doing more than imprinting a superficial image on the bank, she says.

As more feminine names appear on the officers' and branch managers' lists, she hopes a woman's individualistic philosophy permeates the male traditions.

The biggest obstacle? "Where do you fit in?"

"You don't exactly fit in with the other attorneys or the secretarial group. How can women rely on teamwork when there's only a few women on the team?" she queries.

"I guess I'm a loner anyway, but the only way that's going to change is when there are more women becoming attorneys."

HER INDIVIDUALISTIC streak keeps her away from feminist group

"Bankers are undergoing what the auto industry went through five years ago," she explains. "The consumer movement has affected banks to quite a degree. Forms consistently have to be revised to keep up with regulations. The saying goes that you make the loans today and your applications are out of date tomorrow."

Changes in federal regulations can alter economic conditions as well, she says. For example, now that banks must use a woman's income to determine mortgage eligibility, higher income levels are brought into the loan level.

"It indirectly brings higher construction costs because they can get more money for their work," she says. "Income availability has gone up."

A senior attorney does litigation work as well, defending the bank in lawsuits, as well as beginning suits on delinquent accounts, loans and Master Charge accounts, as well as commercial account problems.

The diversity of the job is what lured her away from Ford Motor Co. three years ago.

"You have to be very versatile. That's one reason I chose the bank rather than a corporation where you usually get into a highly technical area," she says. She also has a distaste for unpaid overtime.

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TRACY THOMPSON

involvement, but she pushes in her own way, much in keeping with the philosophy of her mother, who was one of the lone career females during her daughter's youth.

"Through her, I learned how things were tough for a woman," Ms. Thompson explains. She prefers to work in her own arena and was instrumental in getting a female legal assistant on board at NBD.

Her own career course was diverted in college, when she pursued a science career rather than law. After a few

years of working as a chemist, she opted for law school, supplementing a scholarship and grant with part-time work as a legal secretary and law clerk.

She discovered law school was easier than science, she says, and graduated Summa Cum Laude from U-D, one of seven women in the class. During her law career, she added a yen for golf and dancing to her life and maintained an interest in playing the piano.

Three years ago, she married William Edwards, an engineer, but retained her maiden name.

"I like it," she explains. "You go through school with the name, you get your degrees in your name. By taking another name in marriage, you lose your history as a person."

Since the couple's move to Farmington, she's acquired a gardening talent as well, caring for 100 rose bushes.

"I got hooked," she says, on both roses and the community atmosphere near downtown Farmington. But leisure time is scarce for a working lawyer.

"I guess I take my work too seriously, but you can't do everything," she shrugs. She's put aside dealing with the idea of a family for the present, but that's another decision a career-oriented woman has to face.

"Not yet," she says with a smile.

Bizarre robbery nets \$200 for pedestrian thief

A persistent robber managed to wrestle a change purse containing \$200 from a Farmington woman on his second attempt.

City of Farmington Public Safety officers are investigating the unnamed robbery which occurred at 12:50 a.m. Tuesday, according to Det. Ray Lardie.

Priscilla Rogers, 26, and a friend, George Carveth, of Farmington Hills were sitting in Ms. Rogers' car in the parking lot of her apartment complex at the corner of Farmington and Freedom roads, when the suspect approached the car.

When he requested a cigarette, Ms. Rogers rolled down her window on the driver's side of the car, Lardie explained. The suspect grabbed her around the neck and began choking her and shaking her head.

Carveth got out of the car and subdued the assailant while Ms. Rogers got away, but the assailant managed to disengage from Carveth and ran away.

Carveth and Ms. Rogers searched

for the suspect in her car and found him again near Cloverdale School on Freedom Road.

WHEN CARVETH subdued the assailant for the second time, Ms. Rogers ran across a field to get to a phone to call police. However, the persistent robber once again managed to get away from Carveth, pursuing Ms. Rogers across the field and wrestling her to the ground.

Again the robber began choking her and demanding her money, grabbed her change purse and fled on foot. The empty change purse was found by police at the corner of Freedom and Orchard Lake Roads, Lardie says.

Police are continuing their investigation. The assailant is described as a male, approximately 5-8, about 150 lbs., with brown shoulder-length hair and a fair complexion. He was wearing blue jeans and a brown jacket with an orange collar.

Carveth and Ms. Rogers sustained bumps and bruises during the scuffles.



Dust control on subdivision streets was the name of the debate at this week's Farmington Hills council session. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

inside

THE PET PLACE

Jack DeBussey didn't have far to look to find a new home for his young bassel hound. He just put an ad in our classified section and "sold her on the first call." If your pets are posing a problem, call us today. The solution is as near as your telephone.

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Amusements.....7-11C
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Community Calendar.....2B
Editorial Opinion.....16A
Inside Angles.....3A
In the Pocket.....4C
Obituaries.....2A, 15C
Sports.....Section C
Suburban Life.....Section B