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Hills council woos HUD for compromise

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Farmington Hills south-end residents still may see their water sewer system completed and have a shot at rejuvenating their homes with federal funds.

After weeks of haggling between residents and city council, the legislative body has adopted a compromise plan it hopes will be accepted by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Councilman Earl Oppertauser proposed the two-pronged program which is aimed at calming local apprehension over low income housing proposals and, if successful, would continue the sewer and rehabilitation program.

The first part of the proposal, unanimously adopted, advises the newly formed resident ad hoc committee to study the advisability of continuing sewer development and housing rehabilitation with federal funds.

The second section proposes that city officials, both administrative and elected, sit down with HUD officials and discuss the feasibility of continuing the community development program without the low income housing stipulations.

Voting against that proposal was Councilmember Joanne Saronen.

The original community development program called for the construction of 100 low income housing units. City council voted to pull out of that agreement Sept. 11 after a public

outray from 500 residents who appeared at that meeting.

Oppertauser, who voted to quash the HUD program earlier this month, said his proposal was an attempt to salvage a program which was badly needed for the less affluent Farmington Hills residents.

Under the HUD program, funds were to be used to complete the Waldron and Southeast storm sewers as well as provide for the loans and grants rehabilitation program.

The loans and grants program provided money to residents for home repair. Depending on financial need, the resident could either receive a low interest loan or an outright grant.

Oppertauser pointed to the agree-

ment which St. Clair Shores has with HUD. Under that agreement, the requirement for low income housing is excluded, he said.

The veteran councilman, who had left open an option to support the program after Sept. 11, continuing on discussion with HUD officials, said he still was dissatisfied with HUD's answers.

"I don't think it would be worth running the risk of tearing this community apart by continuing with the program," Oppertauser said about the previous HUD proposal.

"I'm afraid if we continue to try and pursue the low income housing with HUD we would end up with a greater problem of tearing the city apart and

the program wouldn't be successful," he said.

Oppertauser compared the low income housing program with the Biblical parable where King Solomon offered to split a child in two so two women claiming to be its mother could share the child.

Solomon resolved the problem by giving the child to the woman who agreed to give up the child rather than having it killed.

"I don't want the city cut in two," he said. "It's time for us to cool it a little and let the anxiety give way to reason and common sense."

Originally, Oppertauser's proposal recommended that acting city man-

ager Floyd Cairns and the city attorney talk to HUD officials.

But Councilmember Joanne Smith insisted that the council be included in the discussion so they could directly hear what HUD officials had to say.

"I would like to see the council as a whole talk with HUD. We have never been told anything by HUD as a group," she said.

In previous weeks, she said, various councilmembers and residents have talked with HUD officials separately and all have come back with differing stories.

Oppertauser agreed and emphasized that his proposal is based on the community's right to federal funds which, in reality, were its tax dollars.



Winning form

Harrison quarterback Drew Norton cocks his arm as a Waterford Mott player attempts to keep him from passing. To see how the Harrison squad shut out

Mott, 24-0, turn to the sports section. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

South-end homeowners spark in-house recall

Repercussions from the controversy over the federally funded community development block grant program has spurred a recall petition drive within the Section 36 Homeowners Association.

More than 35 signatures have been gathered from among members to recall three members of the board of directors and the group's president.

Petitions are slated to be turned in at tonight's association meeting at 8 p.m. at St. Alexander Roman Catholic Church on Shiawassee, east of Middlebelt.

Target of the recall are President Ann Struble, and board members Judy Guertin, Peggy Quisenberry, and WG Lawson.

Three other board members are not mentioned in the recall drive. They are Darlene Pettay, Earl Gilbert and Leona Leyland.

Proponents of the recall claim that the board members neglected to carry out the wishes of association members after a discussion in the July 27 Section 36 meeting.

Recall supporters claim that the board should have passed on to the Farmington Hills City Council, the association's displeasure with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Block Grant program.

The city has since withdrawn from participation in the program. Some Section 36 residents were

unhappy with the proposal because it called for low income housing to be built exclusively in that part of the community. They felt it should be spread across the community.

Section 36 is bounded by Inkster Road, Middlebelt, Nine Mile, and Eight Mile.

Recall supporters are reluctant to talk about the issue publicly, claiming the group is non-political and is only a concern of the neighborhood, according to Mrs. Pettay.

She claims to be neutral on the issue.

But Mrs. Struble and Mrs. Guertin say they are getting a bad deal.

"There wasn't any direction given to us. No vote was taken at the meeting," she says.

Mrs. Struble reinforces that thinking by saying a discussion about the low income housing took place at the July 27 meeting but a motion wasn't made and a formal vote wasn't taken.

Until a vote is taken on the recall, the officers named on the petition are suspended from their duties according to Roberts Rules of Order, says Mrs. Struble.



We welcome you

Gail Elford, the receptionist for the Farmington Observer, will welcome you to meet for an evening at the Farmington Hills library on Oct. 5 at 8 p.m. For reservations, call Gail at 352-5400.

Meet the Observer

Come on down.

The Farmington Hills Public Library on Twelve Mile west of Orchard Lake Road will be buzzing with activity beginning 8 p.m. Oct. 5.

That's when the Farmington Observer staff will be meet and greet everyone attending their public relations seminar.

Beginning with an introduction to the staff and an explanation of how the paper operates, the evening is aimed at giving an insight into how to get news into the paper.

Persons who are in charge of their organization's publicity campaigns can use the seminar to pick up tips on getting their press released printed. It also will give them a chance to meet the staff and establish a personal contact with the newspaper.

Readers who are interested in hearing about the paper and meeting us are invited to come in and say hello. We'll tell you how hometown news gets into your paper.

A bonus for us is to meet the community and discover the likes and dislikes of our readers.

Persons interested in attending can call office receptionist Gail Elford at 352-5400 from 8:30 a.m.-noon and from 1:30-3 p.m.

SHE'LL BE GLAD to register you for the free seminar.

Leave your phone number and tell us if you represent a group. We would appreciate knowing how many persons will be in your party so we can arrange for refreshments.

Press seminar booklets will be available to use as a guide throughout the year for preparing releases.

Leading the discussion will be Farmington editor Steve Barnaby, accompanied by reporters Louise Okrusky and Lynn Orr. Suburban Life editor Loraine McClish and photographer Harry Maute and Ms. Elford will be there, too.

So come on down. We'll be looking forward to meeting you.

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Abe lives in historian's eyes

By ED BAS

The most written about figure in history is Jesus Christ.

Quick now, who is second? Karl Marx, Adolf Hitler, John Kennedy?

Nope. It's good old Abe Lincoln.

Weldon Petz, who should know such things, made that remark in opening his talk Thursday on Lincoln before the Pontiac Area Association of Retired School Personnel meeting at the Rochester Elks Club.

Petz is a fourth generation Detroit, the principal at Flanders Elementary School in Farmington, and a nationwide authority on Lincoln. Petz has been studying Lincoln's life almost as long as he's been a teacher. He started teaching 34 years ago and is nearing the time when he will become a member of his host's association himself.

Like many such studies, Lincoln's life study began as a hobby with Petz, and as a research subject. It has turned into much, much more.

Petz has delivered more than 900 lectures on various aspects of Lincoln, from his musical interests to his education, which was Thursday's subject. In 1972, Petz got the distinction of being only the 53d person granted a doctor of letters conferred by Lincoln Memorial University. Among the first 52 recipients are Carl Sandburg and historian Bruce Catton.

ALONG WITH the knowledge stored in his head, Petz has collected a mountain of Lincoln memorabilia, from a model of the schoolhouse he attended to two well-worn books like those used by Lincoln.

"My wife reminds me every day of how many things I have," he said.

Lincoln was indeed a "beapole" standing six feet, four inches and weighing less than 170 pounds, according to Petz. Lincoln had a photographic memory and would be considered a genius by anyone's intelligence quotient. He had only a year and a half

of formal schooling spread out over seven years.

School was five miles away, Petz said, and just wasn't that easy to get to. Besides, there was other work to be done.

Contrary to popular belief, Lincoln and Stephen Douglas were good friends, though bitter political enemies. Lincoln fully expected to lose the Senate race in Ohio where the pair staged the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates.

He did it for the exposure, Petz said. "Next to Douglas, they looked like the figure 10," Petz said. "Douglas was only five feet, four inches and just as big around."

Lincoln once worked eight hours a day for three days in order to pay for a book loaned to him by a neighbor. The book probably sold for 25 cents at that time, Petz said.

That and one other book were a large part of Lincoln's early education in what Petz called the "woodlands university," meaning he was largely self-taught.

"If you ever see a painting of Lincoln splitting rails with an axe, it's a falsehood," Petz said. "Like any good wood chopper, he used a wedge and a maul."

Petz owns one of only 12 existing copies of "Christians' Defense," a sort of lawyer's view of Christianity, according to Petz. It was written by James Smith, whom Lincoln later appointed counsel to Scotland. Much of Lincoln's religious beliefs Petz traces to that book.

Naturally, Petz has tattered copies of both books.

One of Petz' most touching stories is about the sculptor Leonard Volk making a plaster cast of Lincoln's face for a later sculpture. Volk's wife was a relative of Douglas, and she sent him to do a sculpture of the man.

"Like any good husband, he complied," Petz said. "But Lincoln's face

interested him, so that he went back to him and talked Abe into a painful one-hour sitting to produce the cast.

"He also had Lincoln back later for casts of both his hands," Petz said.

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Weldon Petz doesn't stop with reading about Lincoln—he collects Lincoln-era memorabilia, too. (Staff photo by Mindy Saunders)