

Farmington Observer

Volume 90 Number 19

Monday, December 18, 1978

Farmington, Michigan

44 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents

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Recall move stunted as compromises loom

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

analysis

The movement to recall three Farmington Hills council members has been put on hold pending the outcome of two compromises.

Since September, a group of residents calling themselves Citizens United For Recall (CURE) has been circulating recall petitions for Mayor Jan Dolan and councilwomen Cathy Jones and Joanne Smith.

CURE was objecting to the three council members' support of zoning for senior citizen housing and federal monies earmarked for future construction of low income housing in the southeast section of the city.

But recent developments have caused the movement to grind to a halt.

The compromises came to light at last week's council session, when Councilman Earl Oppertbauer recommended that the council discuss the possibility of putting the senior citizen zoning question on the ballot next November. The council will discuss the advisory referendum possibility at the first meeting in January.

Basically, the question would ask whether residents favor the present RCE-1 zoning, which allows buildings up to 60 feet to be constructed specifically for senior citizens.

This was a dramatic turnaround on Oppertbauer's part since he has been one of the prime supporters of the senior citizen zoning. He also has voted

against motions by Councilman Joe Alkaeb to put the question on the ballot.

But Oppertbauer says he has been thinking of proposing a ballot question since May. He voted against Alkaeb's proposal, he says, because it wasn't specific enough.

Although Oppertbauer denies that any compromises have been made, he does say that he hopes the question will cool down the recall movement.

The Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills, opponents of the RCE-1 zoning, reportedly have agreed to back off the recall effort if an advisory referendum is put on the ballot.

The Homeowners, along with a group of residents in the south end, have been primary supporters of the recall. But without Council of Homeowner support it is doubtful whether enough signatures could be garnered to put the recall question to a vote.

Also at stake is the proposed bonding issue for senior citizen housing which would give the city sufficient funds to build its own senior citizen complex.

Council members, including Alkaeb, support the bonding issue since it would be financed without federal funds. The Hills council is attempting to gauge the Homeowners' Council support for the bonding.

Since the RCE-1 zoning was

approved by the city council last year, the Homeowner's Council has been fighting to wipe the ordinance from the books, but the majority of the city council has remained steadfast in its support.

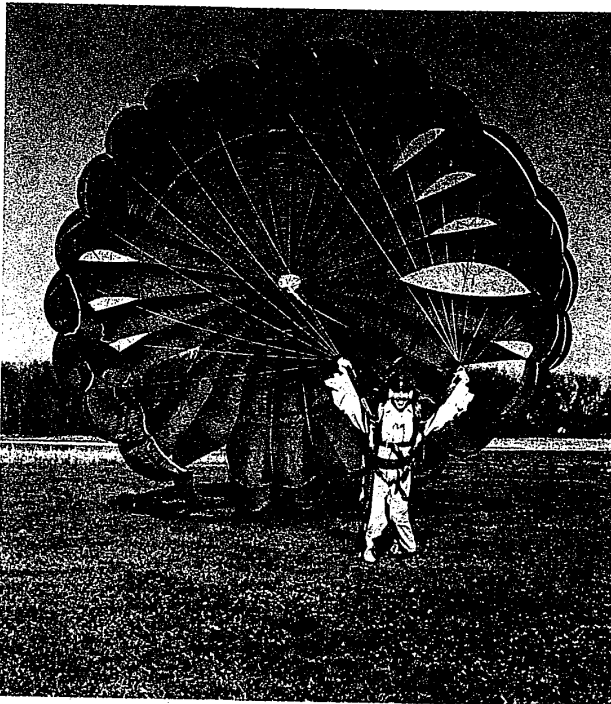
The second compromise revolves around who shall occupy the mayor's seat in January. Dolan is finishing her year-long term and Smith is slated to take the position.

But the Homeowners oppose Smith's appointment, as do some of the city council members. The majority recall petitions signed have been for Smith's ouster, according to recall backers.

The Hills council is slated to consider the mayoral question at tonight's meeting. Recall backers, including Homeowners Council members, would like to see either Oppertbauer or Councilman Keith Deacon be elected mayor. Both have served in that position before.

But Smith has chosen to fight, and her name will be put into nomination by one of her council backers—Jones or Dolan. The swing vote is with Councilwoman Joanne Soronen who, although she has opposed the recall movement, is a former member of the Homeowners Council.

The city council has agreed to deal with the mayoral question at tonight's meeting only if Smith is present. She is slated for minor surgery and may be hospitalized. If she isn't present, the council will vote for mayor at a January meeting.



Richard Crayne, a real estate agent in Westland, makes a perfect landing after a skyjump, and Observer & Eccentric photographer Art Emanuel (below, left) is there to catch the action.

Skydiving: 'Like sitting on swing'

By MAURIE WALKER

Have you ever wondered at those "dare devil" skydivers, who float through the air and form patterns with other divers with apparent ease?

Are they scared? Or do they just get into an airplane, jump and pull the chute?

It's really not as dangerous as it appears, says Observer photographer Art Emanuel, who learned to parachute at Fort Benning, Ga., during World War II. He joined a bunch of dedicated skydivers at the Tecumseh airport for one of their weekend jumps.

He strapped a camera to his helmet and took shots in the planes, on the ground and even on the way down.

"As a Signal Corps photographer during the war, I had to learn to jump in the event of an emergency," said Emanuel, a Plymouth resident who has served on the Observer & Eccen-

tric staff for nearly a decade.

"Frankly, I was hesitant about jumping after 35 years, but I couldn't resist the urge to try it again."

Skydivers understand, said Chico Martinez, a jump master out of the Tecumseh airport, and Cathy Bunk of Ann Arbor, who made her first jump in 1971 and has been skydiving for the last 18 months.

"A person gets addicted to jumping," Ms. Bunk said. "For some reason or other, you have to go back and do it again."

Up there, she added, "it's like sitting on a swing, so peaceful you can hear yourself think."

MARTINEZ SAID before a person is permitted to jump, he must have at least half a day of ground training and be emotionally and physically fit.

Those trained in skydiving learn to (Continued on Page 2A)

Historical society fights to save 19th century home

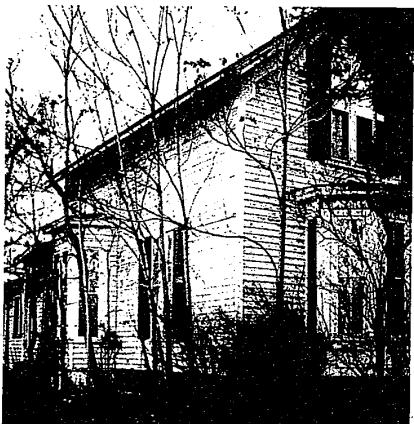
By MARY GNEWEK

The Farmington Historical Society needs a quick \$20,000.

That's what it would take to save a 19th century house from demolition. The historic home, adjacent to the Federal's Department Store in downtown Farmington, is scheduled for the wrecking ball within the next two

months to make room for a parking lot.

THE OWNERS of the property, a group of downtown businessmen known as the Farmington Center Co., has agreed to let the historical society have the house. But it must pay all moving costs. And the group says it can't afford the price.



Members of the Farmington Historical Society are attempting to save this house next to Federal's. (Staff photo)

A spokeswoman for one local house moving firm, Hofess C. L. of South Lyon, said it would cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 depending on the distance moved and the condition of the house.

"We hate to see it go, but what can we do?" said Nancy Leonard, vice-president of the society and a member of the Farmington Historical Commission. "The price of moving the house is too high. And we wouldn't have a place to put it."

The historical society doesn't have a fund for preservation projects. Unlike the commission, whose members were appointed by the Farmington City Council, the society's membership is open to anyone interested in preservation.

"WE'VE HAD SOME fundraisers, but we've never been able to raise that kind of money," said society member Bob Cook.

The house is one of the last few residences standing on the land now zoned commercial. Like the other houses in the area, it was owned by generations of the same family.

Society members say it was built about 1870 by William Irish, an employee of the Detroit United Railway. Irish and his wife, Ella, lived there for several years but had no children.

They raised a niece, Mildred Adams, who married Clara Grace and eventually gained ownership of the home. The Grace's granddaughter, Angie Fischel, sold the house to the Farmington Center Co. and moved to Iowa.

"It's a well built house, with beautiful woodwork, high ceilings, a center hall and bay windows," said Frances Hunt, who lives across the street from the Irish home.

AS A CHILD she recalls spending a lot of time in the house.

"Mrs. Irish loved children. We were always welcome there. About 25 years ago, a lovely room was added behind the kitchen and used as a den."

"It's in dreadful shape now, terribly run down. I think some antique dealers could salvage the woodwork."

The only way these houses could be saved is with city or state aid. We're just stuck here, I guess. We can't sell our homes for residences, and the plan commission has to approve sales to businesses. They won't let anyone in this town."

Mrs. Hunt said her home has been owned by members of her family since 1862. She thinks it was built before the Irish home. Five historic homes are left on the commercial strip on Grand River.

"They just demolished a house built in 1860 last week near Shawnae and Farmington Rd.," Leonard said. "It was in bad shape and went down fast. That's the trend on land zoned commercial."



Schoolcraft seeks one mill

Voters in the Schoolcraft College District can expect to go to the polls March 26 and decide whether to raise the property tax limitation by one mill for five years.

The tax increase, which amounts to \$1 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation, would raise about \$2.1 million a year and a total of nearly \$11 million for construction programs at the two-year community college.

Trustees agreed informally Wednesday to ask the tax increase at a special election with elementary or secondary district money issues on the ballot.

Trustee Len Wozniak objected to spending \$30,000 on a special election, but other board members argued Schoolcraft's proposal wouldn't stand a chance in a June election when Garden City, Livonia, Northville and Plymouth-Canton are expected to put tax increase proposals before voters.

"If there are others on the ballot, we'll go down," said Trustee Rosina Raymond.

Vice-Chairman Harry Greenleaf added it is necessary to start soon on the \$1.5 million culinary arts addition to the Waterman Campus Center in order to use a \$433,000 state appropriation for fiscal 1979-80.

Details of what the tax and bond issue will cover are yet to be worked out, but the outlines of the building program have remained consistent in recent years.

Culinary arts is a top priority. The addition will allow the program to double enrollment to 120 and cut a long waiting list.

The college is committed to building a new road to the east end of the campus from Six Mile. It plans to resurface some parking lots.

There is pressure from accreditation agencies to expand the library, which is considered far too small for a college of 8,000 students. A new library-resource center will allow the present Bradner Library to be remodeled for offices and classrooms.

Vocational-technical classroom space is another possibility.

Dead, however, is the plan for a fine arts facility that would include an auditorium and classroom space.

Hills posts agenda

FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL

31555 Eleven Mile

7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 18

- Public hearings concerning the cost of road improvements on Quail Hollow and the proposed closing of Tulipwood.
- Public hearing in consideration of zoning amendatory ordinance regarding unenclosed decks in rear yards.
- Appointment of city manager.
- Consideration of ballot proposal for senior citizens housing project.
- Consideration of supplemental budget appropriation for department of public services to replace personnel.
- Consideration of traffic control order for Inkster and Twelve Mile.
- Reorganization of city council.
- Appointments to fill vacancy on Farmington Area Arts Commission.
- Consideration of proposed fee changes for planning consultants, Villan Leman and Associates.
- Adoption of resolution for funding pending special assessment districts (SAD). These are: Farmington Ridge planned residential development, Briar Hill, Pleasant Valley, Kendallwood Roads, Fourteen Mile sewer, Edgell.
- Consideration on awarding bids on SAD's.

inside

Break an arm

With the winter comes the danger of breaking a limb. Reporter Louise O'Rutsky found out what it was like, first hand, and talked to a few other local celebrities who have found themselves cast in a similar role. To see what she has to say, turn to Page 6B.

At Your Leisure
Community Calendar
Crackerbarrel Debate
Monday's Commentary
Obituaries
Suburban Life
Sports

7B
6B
8B
8B
7A
Section B
Section C