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Housing questions to jam November ballot

By STEVE BARNABY

Farmington Editor
Farmington Hills residents will have a voice on the direction of senior citizen housing in their city come Nov. 6.
The Hills Council has voted to place three additional questions on the ballot concerning the controversial topic.
The first question, proposed by Mayor Earl Opperhauser, would authorize the city to issue \$8 million in general-obligation bonds to build senior housing.

This proposal is identical to one which would have been voted on last March. But it was dumped by council early this year. The feeling at that time was that it wouldn't meet the needs of

senior citizens in need of financial aid.
The second proposal, also made by Opperhauser, is an advisory question asking residents' opinion about federal subsidies.

The question reads, "Do you favor the acceptance of federal rent subsidies at city sponsored housing developments for:

a) needy senior citizens?

b) needy families?"

A third proposal, sponsored by Councilwoman Jan Dolan, asks voters if: "in the absence of the availability of federal rent subsidies for the city of Farm-

ington Hills sponsored housing developments, do you favor levying up to three mills for that purpose?"

WHILE ALL proposals were passed by the city's legislative body, council election overtones were evident in the debate both at the council table and from the floor.

Mrs. Dolan, a proponent of the Freedom and Drake low income-senior citizen housing project, labeled her ballot question as asking voters to "fish or cut bait."

In the yearlong controversy over state and federally subsidized housing, some persons opposed to the plan have expressed the alternative that a senior

citizen project be funded through self-taxation.

"This gives everyone the opportunity to vote if they don't want the subsidy. We should let the seniors know that there are not too many options left," she said.

The Freedom and Drake project would be funded through bonds sold by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Rents would be subsidized through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The project would be privately managed.

The project has been the top priority issue during the election campaign. The top three vote-getters in the recent

primary all were candidates opposed to the housing plan.

Candidate Donn Wolf, top vote-getter, commended the council for putting the questions and the ballot. He also recommended that council postpone until after the election negotiations on the Freedom and Drake project.

"If (the ballot question) is what we have been asking for for a long, long time — and it is better late than never," he said.

"Whether it was prompted by some of the campaign speeches I and others have given in the last couple of months or by last Tuesday's election, I really don't know, nor is it important.

"The significant thing is that this council, at last, is going to discuss placing the issue on the ballot."

THROUGHOUT the housing debate, opponents to the low-income housing stipulations have requested that the issue put the question on the ballot.

"To show your good faith, I would suggest that any motion regarding an advisory referendum on low-income housing rent subsidies by the federal government include a stipulation that any and all present negotiations on the Freedom and Drake project be stopped immediately," he said.

A golden celebration

Orphanage marks anniversary

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Most of the children at St. Vincent Sarah Fisher Home in Farmington Hills already have a strike against them. They are without family or have been removed from an abusive family. Others may have loving families but their behavior has proved too much for the parents to handle and the child is sent to an institution.

This year, St. Vincent Sarah Fisher marks 50 years of taking care of children who have no one else to watch over them.

The children vary in backgrounds but are in the 5-12 age bracket. Earlier in its history, St. Vincent Sarah Fisher cared for orphaned children. But times have changed since the order of the Daughters of Charity opened a home for girls in Detroit in 1844.

TODAY, the boys and girls at the home are from families in which the parents couldn't take care of them for either financial or health reasons.

Broken families and abusive parents are often the reasons children come to the home.

Whether their parents cared about them or not, the children bring their problems to the home, although they are not severely delinquent or handicapped.

"Some youngsters almost defy you to



SISTER ANTHONY PRUGGER

give them love and affection," said Sister Anthony Prugger, executive director. "It's pretty hard to love society when you have all the earmarks of being abused."

The treatment for an abused child includes plenty of affection, she added. They're put on a nutritious diet, while social workers and group therapy help the children to cope with their problems.

The children live in cottages which

radiate off the main building and resemble regular houses inside. Fourteen children live in each cottage.

EACH CHILD has a separate desk, bureau and night stand. Dolls and stuffed animals decorate some of the beds, adding a touch of individuality.

"We try to make it as much like a regular home as possible," said Sister Anthony.

"We encourage the children to go to their friends' homes. They must ask permission first. And we encourage their friends to come here."

Children attend various schools within the Farmington system. More than one school is open to the students so they don't become easily earmarked as children from an institution.

Another advantage of the system is that it allows the house parents and social workers to split up any two children who tend to have discipline problems.

But individuality is the key word even when it comes to picking the children's clothes. Although the school buys in lots to economize, administrators make sure the clothes aren't duplicate sets.

According to Sister Anthony, a little boy with two unsuccessful tries in a foster home under his belt was sent to

the home once. There he met a volunteer who slowly began to take a special interest in him.

She eventually adopted him. But in spite of the optimistic approach, Sister Anthony doesn't claim that all the home's charges turn into success stories.

"Not every child is a 100 percent success. There are children who fall between the cracks," she said.

CHILDREN ARE REFERRED to the home by other agencies. St. Vincent Sarah Fisher has a capacity for 100 children. At present 82 live there.

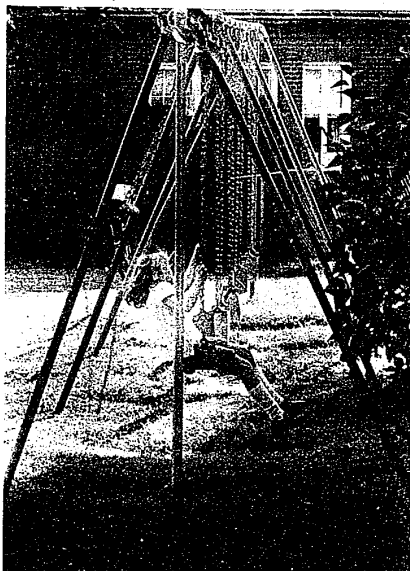
If a child referred to the home can't make it, another program is recommended.

"They stay from six months to a year. It's a try-out. If he can make it here, he can make it at home," Sr. Anthony said.

The walls at St. Vincent Sarah Fisher are lined with children's drawings as well as religious paintings and photos of children.

At one time, babies were kept at the home, but the state ruled several years ago that children under four weren't to be institutionalized.

The present building was constructed by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fisher and Nanette Lansing Reilly in 1929



A little girl enjoys a moment of solitude on the swing behind one of the cottages at St. Vincent Sarah Fisher. (Staff photo by Randy Bors) (

Boys' Republic moves to Shiawassee

By MARY GNIEWEK

Shiawassee Elementary School, which became the district's sixth victim of declining enrollment when it closed in June, may have new tenants soon.

School administrators are proposing a three-fold use for the empty building at Shiawassee and Tuck roads.

Plans include moving Boys Republic school, a special education program educators say is cramped for space, to Shiawassee.

Students will remain housed at the Nine Mile site.

Also, according to School Superintendent Lewis Schulman, part of the building would be made available to the city of Farmington Hills to use as a recreation center. The city expressed an interest in the building for recreation earlier this year.

Administrators also want to convert the school library into a central instructional media center that would consolidate learning materials for all teachers.

"The main thing, we don't want the building to stand empty and vandalized like Bond school," Schulman said.

The school board, which voted unanimously to close Shiawassee school last January, may study the administration's three-part proposal as early as next week.

Shiawassee, like Cloverdale, Bond, Farmington Junior High, Ten Mile and Fairview schools, was closed because of a continued districtwide drop in school enrollments.

ONLY BOND AND Shiawassee schools are standing empty today. Moving Boys Republic to Shiawassee

school will solve another financial problem for the school district. It was asked to pay rent this year for using the school building which is located on the Boys Republic campus at Nine Mile road and Inkster. No rent agreement had been reached.

Boys Republic houses wards of the state between the ages of 12 and 17. Financed by the State Department of Social Services and the United Foundation, residents are referred there from juvenile courts. Some come from broken homes.

Since a 1975 state mandate, the local school district has provided education for the youths as part of its special education program.

Boys Republic principal William Miller and special education coordinator Graham Lewis are in favor of the move to Shiawassee.

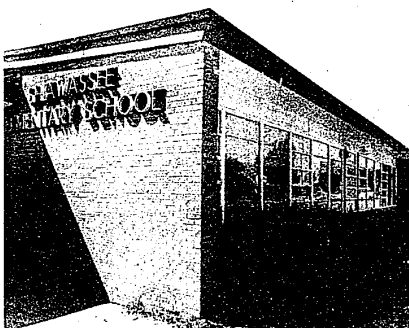
"We have about 60 students. We're really cramped for space," Miller said. "We have 13 or 14 kids in one little room."

The school provides a full load of courses. Miller said many classes, such as math, science and reading, are taught on a remedial basis since many of the students have missed a lot of regular school.

"It's not good for the students to attend class where they live. Shiawassee will be a more natural setting," Supt. Schulman said.

Boys Republic administrator Gordon Boring asked the school district this year for reimbursement for the cost of maintenance of the building and utilities.

"Three dollars a square foot, but that wasn't a firm figure," Boring said.



Shiawassee Elementary School has been empty since it closed due to declining enrollment in June. A three-fold proposal calls for the building to be used for classes, a recreation center, and a media center for all the teachers in the district. (Staff photo by Randy Bors) (

Cable television makes bid in Farmington

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

First-run movies, sports, kiddie shows and adult education, as well as two-way TV, are the wave of the future as promised by two pay-television concerns.

Home Box Office and Omnicom of Michigan are petitioning various administrative boards in the Farmington area for permission to use utility lines or alter height regulations for their antennas.

Council's approval of the proposals would pave the way for subscription to various TV packages offered by the two companies.

Home Box Office, which transmits on microwaves rather than cables, went before the Farmington Zoning Board of Appeals recently seeking exemptions from the city's height limits for their subscribers' antennas. The zoning board tabled the proposal.

Subscribers need an antenna in direct line of sight to the Home Box Office transmitter. The antenna needs to be above natural obstructions and

buildings in order to receive transmissions.

At Monday's Farmington City Council meeting, representatives from Omnicom of Michigan asked council members to grant them a non-exclusive franchise to operate cable television in Farmington. Council did not take action on the request.

Omnicom is petitioning the cities of Plymouth and Farmington Hills, and Plymouth, Canton, Northville and Commerce Townships for similar franchises.

THE FRANCHISE gives Omnicom permission to cross city-owned streets and rights of way with their cables.

In return for that privilege, Farmington would receive a 3 percent fee based on the gross subscriber revenues, excluding funds Omnicom earned from installation, advertising or paid TV. Omnicom would lease space on power and telephone poles for their lines as well as burying the cables with utility lines where possible.

The lines attached to telephone poles wouldn't be noticeable said Jeff Dorn

of Omnicom of Michigan, which has offices and studios in Plymouth.

In addition to programs for youngsters, sports shows and movies, the company is offering two-way television which provides for burglar and fire protection.

Installers would place a set of break contacts on doors as part of the burglar alarm system, according to Omnicom engineering consultant Warren Braun.

A medical alert system would give subscribers a "panic button" to push in case of emergency. Installation prices would range from around \$95.50, according to Braun. The monthly fee is projected at \$15.95 for the alarm system.

The 40-channel system would include local TV signals in compliance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations.

STATIONS from Lansing and Toledo also would be received via cable television. Distant signals, such as Channel 17 from Atlanta, Ga., WGM from Chicago or WOR and WPIX from New York, also would be available. The

FCC prohibits one system from carrying of the distant stations.

Locally originated programming from government agencies or schools can be transmitted through the cable service, according to Braun.

Omnicom has offered its Plymouth studios to the school district if Farmington decides to accept the system. The company estimates that it will have available within six months a Reuters terminal which would run off the Dow Jones averages.

Within 18 months, there will be a computer system known as "Plato," which would offer programs enabling the subscriber to learn at home. Puzzles would be offered, also.

For music students, Braun predicted that subscribers would be able to compose on the television screen and have the computer play back the new composition.

The service would cost \$25 to install with an additional monthly fee of \$16-\$17 for the television programming.

Television sets would be converted to the cable system by a box placed on the set. The regular dial would be set

on channel 3.

THE PROPOSED agreement between the city council and Omnicom

would include an accountability method to bring the company before the council to answer citizen complaints.

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