

Farmington Observer

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How neighbors fought battle for senior housing

By MARY GNIEWEK

Andrew Spisak sympathizes with Farmington Hills in its controversy over proposed subsidized-housing.

As administrative assistant to Westland Mayor Thomas Taylor, Spisak heard irate residents complain bitterly about a similar housing proposal in that suburban community a few years back.

"It was an uphill fight. It (the proposal) barely went through the plan commission and it was lucky to get city council support," Spisak said. "Both went through on split votes. There was

not unanimous approval."

Spisak said there were complaints about the size of the 11 story high-rise and surrounding townhouses, known collectively as Greenwood Villa. The project was approved in 1975. The first occupancy permits were issued just over a year ago.

Greenwood Villa, immediately north of the Westland Shopping Center, is financed with federal funds. Approval was granted from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), which administers federal housing subsidies. Earlier this year,

Farmington applied for assistance through MSHDA.

Like Farmington Hills, Westland experienced opposition to the low-income family housing required portion of the plan. Ten percent of Greenwood Villa's residents are members of racial minorities.

"Some people thought we would have another Herman Gardens," Spisak said, referring to the public housing project in west Detroit.

"That didn't happen. It's probably one of the loveliest sights in the state. Most people don't know there's low and

moderate income housing behind the high-rise.

"Management is the main thing. There are lots of people with substantial investment in the property. They do a good job managing the place. There's no stigma attached to this housing project."

Another complaint came from owners of condominiums adjacent to the housing project.

"They thought their property values would plunge," Spisak said. "But they haven't gone down. And another condominium complex is going to be built in the same area."

"They're selling well and the area is still growing."

MSHDA spokeswoman Larrestine Trimm said the low income family housing requirement was tacked onto senior citizen housing project fund requests by HUD, the sponsor of the program.

"It's a federal regulation. The amount of family housing depends on need and market demand," she said. "It's easier to get sponsors for senior citizen housing, but since there is a greater need for family housing, that regulation was tagged on."

Farmington Hills was one of 37 communities which applied to MSHDA in March. It hopes to get a slice of the \$22.8 million HUD pie. Applications are now being reviewed.

"If a community wants and qualifies for federal funds, it must comply with federal regulations," Spisak said. "We had our problems. It did contribute to the demise of three city council people at election time."

"You need strong people on the council — people who recognize the need. You'll go through some traumatic times. But we've had nothing but good from our project."

Pink slip is ritual in schools

By MARY GNIEWEK

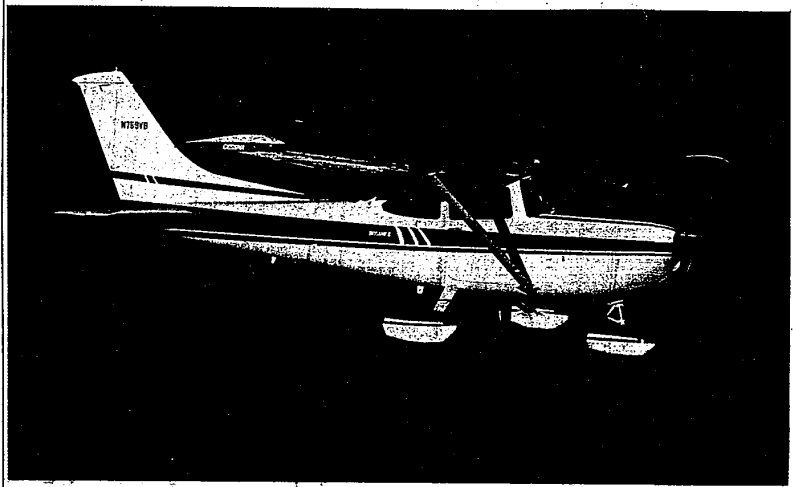
One hundred eight Farmington public school teachers, most with eight years of experience, will be laid off in June because of a continued drop in student enrollment.

The Farmington Board of Education approved the layoffs last week. They will become effective when the school year ends June 15.

Of the 108 teachers to be pink slipped, School Superintendent Lewis Schulman said, at least half the instructors will be called back in September.

"Layoffs are based on seniority — to be perfectly fair," said Schulman. "If we laid off just 50 teachers, they might all be at the secondary level when half the layoffs are needed at the elementary level."

"Or we might lay off all English or industrial teachers. This system allows us to place people appropriately."



Soaring

Pilots from all over the state will be hauling out some of the classic flying machines of the past to enjoy the 1979 Commemorative Michigan Air Tour which will take place this summer. This annual event started 50 years ago and two of the persons who were in the first air tour in 1929 will be in this year's event. To see how you can sign up for this "bit of history" turn to page 5A.

He enjoys the challenge Savage at home in city manager's chair

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Back in 1957, Larry Savage got his first taste of what it's like to be a city manager. Today, 22-years later, he's sure it was the correct choice for him.

The 54-year-old administrative veteran recently took the helm in Farmington Hills as that city's second city manager. He was selected from a field of 64 candidates to replace George Majors.

Portraying himself as an open, low-key administrator, Savage says it is the cumulative achievements over the years which give him satisfaction.

"You get a sense of accomplishment as the years pass," says Savage, rolling the ever-present cigarette through his hands.

"Even when you leave a city, you have a feeling of leaving a little bit of yourself behind. You can see it. The buildings and projects are all there. You almost hate to leave."

Savage took the Farmington Hills post after nearly 15-years as Traverse City's chief administrator. While there, he aided in seeing a 116-unit mid-rise senior citizen housing project constructed.

"That was one program where there was little opposition," he says, noting that the northern Michigan city has a higher-than-average senior citizen population.

Admitting that some difficulties were involved in working with the U.S. Department of Urban Development (HUD) on that senior project, it finally did become a reality. He began working on it in 1964.

The rapid expansion Farmington Hills is experiencing is that city's biggest challenge in the coming years, he says. But, he believes that such issues as senior housing, sewers, paving and development of a tax base all can be handled with a "lot of education" of the residents.

"Due process is important. Things like public hearings aid in keeping the public informed," he says.

"But the policy makers are going to have to make some hard decisions," he says, referring to the city council's will.

But, he says, it is his job to keep the council adequately informed so they aren't surprised by an issue. Since becoming the city's chief administrator, Savage has revised the city council agendas, providing the council with full explanations of the city manager's report.

"We must have an open relation-

ship," says Savage of his relationship with the council. "We must know what each other is thinking."

An examination of the Northwestern University graduate's resume shows that he has a lengthy record of experience with city councils.

After receiving a master's degree in public administration from the University of Michigan in 1948, he was employed as a personnel technician in Milwaukee, Wis. He began his Michigan career in Saginaw where he served as an administrative assistant from 1950 to 1952.

After serving as that city's personnel director, he became Cheboygan's city manager in 1957.

He became Grosse Pointe's first city manager in 1960.

"This is where the action is," says Savage, referring to the city manager's position. "Here you have the ability to get an organization to get things done."

Savage decided to become a city manager because it's as good as running your own business.

"I knew I wasn't going to inherit a business and I do make a good living at this," he says.

He enjoys the give and take of being a city administrator and says he prefers to discuss and resolve problems, rather than sitting behind a desk and dictating.

"A team approach is important. I have an open door to my staff. They can come in here and state their problems and we can thrash it out," he says.

Adjusting his wine-rimmed glasses, the Saginaw native smiles a reserved but warm grin at the mention of his personal hobbies.

"Well, I used to do a lot of hunting and fishing. But right now my son and I are building a steel sailboat — a 42-footer," Savage says, admitting that it is his son who is the expert welder.

The former Naval officer has four children. His family presently lives in Traverse City and will be there until plans are made for a Farmington Hills home.

Teachers hired since September 1971 can expect pink slips.

"This is extremely distressing to us," Schulman said. "The reason is a reduction in enrollment. We have to maintain the same teacher-pupil ratio."

The president of the Farmington Education Association (FEA) urged the board to rehire as many teachers as possible.

"I was pink slipped my first year in the district," said Tom Chrzanoski, FEA president. "It was a very traumatic experience, very demoralizing."

People with eight years experience face the continued possibility of being pink slipped. They ultimately may not have a job in Farmington.

"I urge you to call back as many teachers as possible as soon as you can."

LAST YEAR, 116 teachers were pink slipped. They have since been rehired in Farmington and other districts and two new teachers were hired last year.

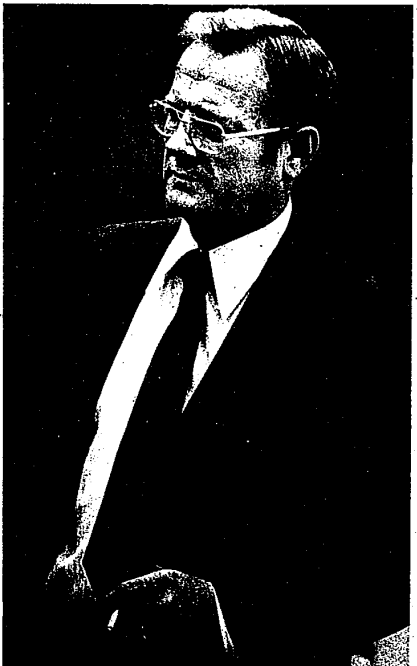
"That list was exhausted, we're happy about that," Schulman said. "Those who weren't called back were placed in other districts, others moved out of the area."

Board Trustee Michael Spiece said there will be a total reduction of 36 positions next year, plus 14 instructors coming back from leave, for a total cut of 50 positions.

Spiece suggested the board study a new procedure for layoffs.

"That list should be somewhere closer to 50," he said. "I think it's wrong (the current procedure) regardless that many teachers know they will have a job in September. I protest."

Spiece was the only trustee on the seven member board to vote against the layoffs.



Following is the March 9 agenda for the Farmington Hills council session which is slated to begin at 7:30 p.m. in council chambers located at Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

- Amendment to establish a new employee retirement system.
- Consideration of extending completion time for park areas in Farmington Green subdivision.
- Request from Our Lady of Mercy High School for a carnival permit to be used May 4-6.
- Request for a festival permit by the Finnish Center for May 26-28.
- Cost hearing dates will be set for the following: Thirteen Mile Road sidewalk; Hemlock Road improvements.
- Bonding resolution for Stonewood Court-Franklin Forest Road improvements.
- Appointments to boards and commissions.
- Consideration of establishing a sidewalk special services district on the west side of Middlebelt from Hemlock to Edgell.
- Consideration of extending Oak Forest Street at Wooddale School.
- Awarding of bids for custodial services at city hall.
- Bids taken for purchase of police vehicles.
- Bid for Kendallwood No. 4 road improvement for a special assessment district.

Farmington Hills post meeting plans

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Angles corrects itself

In Monday's edition, the Inside Angles column featured a notice asking for volunteers to drive hot meals to the elderly in the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency program.

The 90 volunteer drivers of the Farmington and Farmington Hills section of the hot meals at home project deny that there is a need for more drivers in this area, according to telephone coordinator Shirley Najjar.

The 90 drivers include regular volunteers and a list of emergency substitutes.

Listening has been a big part of Larry Savage's job since he joined the Farmington Hills city staff earlier this year. Portraying himself as an open and low-keyed leader, Savage brings with him a long list of administrative accomplishments. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

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NEVER GIVE UP

That's what reporter Louise Okrusky learned this week after interviewing a young woman who has remained courageous and optimistic, even though she is handicapped with blindness. To read her heartwarming story, turn to *Thinking Around on Page 7A.*