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Twenty-five cents

Council forks over funds to end discrimination flap

By LYNN ORR

Secrecy cloaked the largest out-of-court financial settlement of a sex discrimination suit in Michigan last week. A Farmington Hills employee traded the chance for a job with the police department in exchange for \$50,000-100,000 in city funds. This settlement was made Thursday evening after an agreement reached before Federal District Court Judge Patricia Boyle in a pre-trial conference.

Five members of the Farmington Hills City Council met secretly Thursday evening to ratify the agreement.

The case marks the second time that Police Chief John Nichols was involved in a battle over women in a police department. Nichols commanded the Detroit police force when the court ordered a hiring quota of women on the force after sex discrimination suits were reviewed in court.

Bonnie Swadling, 29, a Hills community service officer (CSO), charged that she was denied a job as a police officer because of her sex. She named Nichols in her amended complaint charging retaliation for her original law suit. Nichols was not a Hills employee when Ms. Swadling filed her original suit.

Council members did not reveal why Nichols, who was named in the suit, also was involved in the settlement that will drain much of the city's \$100,000 in self-insurance.

Earlier last week, Nichols said an out-of-court settlement did not admit guilt on the part of the department or its officers.

Other sources speculated that Farmington Hills could not afford to jeopardize nearly \$500,000 in federal funds if an adverse court decision was reached. All court rulings in a sex or minority discrimination suit against a municipality receiving federal funds must be reported to the federal government.

ON JULY 1, 1977, Ms. Swadling filed charges with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, contending her rights were violated when the police department failed to hire her to a position as a police officer.

Ms. Swadling was promoted as a CSO in October 1975 under the federal Com-

prehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). Three police cadets at the time were transferred into the CSO division when a federal grant for the cadet program expired.

All three cadets were hired into the Hills police department and sent to the police academy without further testing. When another spot in the department opened up, Ms. Swadling said she expected to be hired as a police officer. She was told she would have to test for the position and reapply.

She filed her complaint with Oakland County's Office of Manpower which oversees the federal CETA program.

In her federal court suit filed in May of last year, Ms. Swadling asked for \$100,000 in damages for each of various charges, including retaliation by the department since her original suit was filed.

At the time Ms. Swadling filed her suit, the Hills department employed only one woman on the police force. Linda Harris wore a badge designating her "Police Woman No. 1." Before her promotion to the police force, Ms. Harris was a secretary in the department.

Other charges outlined in her disposition submitted in court include that Capt. Russell Conway used CETA-paid CSOs to perform menial jobs, such as driving to a local hamburger stand for coffee, tea and other food items.

Last week other CSOs in the department confirmed that Conway continues to send CSOs to Greene's Hamburgers on Ten Mile and Orchard Lake Road on a nearly daily basis.

The CSOs said they were aware that Farmington Hills would be liable for any accident incurred during their trips to the hamburger stand. One CSO, who refused to reveal a name for fear of reprisals, said job consisted mostly of sitting around, filing, washing cars, or performing "gofer"-type work for officers.

MS. SWADLING also charged that sex stereotypes ruled how jobs were performed by CSOs in the department.

Last fall, she amended her complaint to include reprisal for her suit, naming Nichols, former City Mgr. George Majors, Capt. Conway, and Capt. Thomas Schreiber.

She charged intense scrutiny of her work and appearance, hostility and anger, job reassignments to unfavorable duties and unwarranted criticism.

One incident cited outlined how she was called "on the carpet" by Nichols after Majors protested that she had been speeding in a police car on Farmington Road.

Although another male CSO received a good report after he tackled and handcuffed a suspect, Ms. Swadling

was criticized for following a car and reporting the license plate number after the car had been reported on the police radio to have been involved in a hit-and-run accident.

Ms. Swadling also charged that she was ordered to stand up and turn around so "We can see how you look in pants" when she was hired.

Ms. Swadling also submitted copies of her performance reviews in which she was criticized for poor typing.

Decision made by secrecy pact

Two Farmington Hills council members agree that a secrecy pact was forged in a pre-trial agreement that will cost city taxpayers between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

The beneficiary will be Community Service Officer (CSO) Bonnie Swadling, who had sued the city, charging sex discrimination in the city's hiring practices.

Ms. Swadling claimed she was denied a job as a police officer because of her sex.

But there is disagreement among participants as to who demanded the secrecy pact concerning the settlement. Ms. Swadling's attorney said that neither he nor his client asked for the secrecy pact.

"The case has been satisfactorily resolved," was Sheldon Stark's only other comment. Ms. Swadling refused to comment on the case.

Councilman Joe Alkateeb said he was under the impression that Ms. Swadling had demanded the secrecy agreement. He and Council member Jody Soreen confirmed that five members of the council met with attorneys in closed session Thursday evening and authorized the settlement.

"It's my understanding that as of our decision last night a settlement was reached," said Mrs. Soreen, Friday. She denied that the council violated the

state's Open Meetings Act by making the decision in a secret session.

Alkateeb also denied that the council acted in violation of the law and said that the settlement figure would be public information after the transaction occurs.

The two council members disagree as to whether Police Chief John Nichols was authorized to negotiate the settlement, despite his status as a defendant in the suit.

Mayor Earl Oppertbauer and Council member Catherine Jones were unavailable for comment. Council member Jan Dolan refused to discuss the case, and council members Keith Deacon and Joanne Smith were absent from the Thursday evening conclave.

City Atty. Paul Bibeau and Thomas Schwarz, Nichols and Lt. Richard Niemisto met with Ms. Swadling and her attorney before Federal District Judge Patricia Boyle Thursday afternoon. After hours of deliberation, Bibeau met with the council in a closed session to authorize the final financial figure.

Bibeau also was unavailable for comment on the legal questions surrounding the settlement.

Under the Open Meetings Act, all decisions of a public body must be made at an open session.



An Easter sweetheart

Katie Kelly, 2, found out the secret of Easter intrigue when she ran into this bowl of eggs which she promptly helped to dye for the holiday. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Scherrer is mute on embezzlement, passport is held

By MARY GNIEWEK

A plea of not guilty was entered by the court for Farmington Hills attorney P. Scott Scherrer, who stood mute at his arraignment last week on three counts of embezzlement before District Judge Michael Hand.

Judge Hand continued Scherrer's \$50,000 bond and ordered him to turn in his passport. No pre-trial date has yet been set. If convicted, Scherrer could get a maximum 30-year prison term.

The 30-year-old attorney will go to court again Friday morning for a pre-trial exam on six counts of uttering and publishing false bonds and obtaining money under false pretenses over \$100. Those charges could net him a maximum 72 years in prison.

Scherrer was arrested March 15 following an investigation by Michigan State and Farmington Hills police and the Michigan Department of Commerce into charges of selling counterfeit bonds.

As the probe unraveled, investigators linked the attorney to several fraudulent land deals that, combined with phony bond sales, pushed the warrants on the embezzlement charges were issued March 30.

Farmington Hills Detective John Hedrick said the 17-member investigation team may be expanded. Police have contacted all the victims. About 80 people are involved.

HEDRICK said five investors were involved in prosecuting Scherrer on the land fraud deal. The chief investor, Ohio Dr. J. David Asun, allegedly paid Scherrer \$200,000 for vacant parcels of

land in the I-75 — Nine Mile area. Scherrer does not own the property.

According to police, Scherrer also allegedly sold the same Florida condominium three times; a Farmington Hills church he didn't own; property in seven states and Canada which he didn't own; and 10 counterfeit bond schemes using names of various corporations.

Scherrer was forced into involuntary bankruptcy by three creditors who filed against him. The bankruptcy is in Federal District Court under Judge Harry C. Hackett.

"Whatever assets he has after liquidation, after court costs and attorneys fees, will be divided among his creditors," said Frank Kenney, tax attorney for Scherrer.

Kenney estimated Scherrer's personal wealth before his arrest at \$500,000. The attorney met with a group of Scherrer's creditors two weeks ago at the Ramada Inn in Southfield before the bankruptcy was initiated. About 100 people were there.

"I EXPLAINED the facts and told them what could be done. My intent is to resolve this so that creditors can get maximum recovery," Kenney said.

"It would have been better without the bankruptcy. That's going to incur extra expenses."

The bankruptcy has no effect on the criminal charges lodged against Scherrer. Bloomfield Hills attorney Alex McGarry is representing Scherrer.

McGarry said he is waiting for the court to set a date for the embezzlement pre-trial exam.

"There are 10 actual counts against him," McGarry said. "We anticipate a preliminary exam on the first case April 20."

Gravius bids for return

Arena set for trustee campaign

By MARY GNIEWEK

Two incumbents, one veteran and two newcomers have tossed their hats into the political ring for two seats on the Farmington Board of Education. The election is June 11 and voters must register by May 14.

James McGlincy, appointed by the board last July to fill the seat vacated by resigning trustee Dr. Mervyn Ross, is among four hopefuls for a one-year term. Incumbent vice president Michael Shpiece is running unopposed for another four-year term.



GRAVIUS

SAUNDERS

MCGLINCY

BECKENRIDGE

SHPICEE

McGlincy

McGlincy, 49, is a ten-year resident of Farmington. Married with one child, he was a past president of the Ten Mile School PTA and on the board of the Alameda Elementary School PTA.

"I bring expertise in labor relations and personnel matters," said McGlincy, who is associate director in charge of personnel and labor relations at Wayne County General Hospital.

"I have 24 years experience in government dealing with the kinds of issues schools deal with. I think the (Farmington) board has done an outstanding job with its resources.

"I was considered with six other applicants and was successful in my appointment by the board last year. Now, I'll have to be successful with the voters."

Gravius

FORMER SCHOOL trustee Bill Gravius, who completed a four-year term on the Farmington Board last year, is back in contention for the one-year post.

"I like to be involved," he said. "I'm

happy with the district and would like to maintain quality education. I have a business background to lend to the board," said Gravius, who is employed by the Marathon Oil Company.

Gravius, 47, is married and the father of two children who attend North Farmington High and Dunckel Junior High. He is a 17-year resident of Farmington Hills.

He has been board president, vice president, treasurer and chairman of the building and site committee, which reviews and develops plans for school property. Gravius was also a member of the Farmington Recreation Commission for two years.

Saunders

Nineteen-year-old Megan Saunders of Farmington Hills hopes to bring a better understanding between administration and students to the board.

"I'm enthusiastic, and interested in the future of the district," said the Wayne State University sophomore, a mass communications and history major.

"Quality education is the main concern of everyone, but I'd like to con-

tribute to a better response between students and the board.

"With Headlee, we'll face big cut-backs: It will be hard going, but I want to be assured the people of Farmington get a good education."

Miss Saunders, a five-year resident of Farmington Hills, is a 1977 graduate of North Farmington High. While at North, she was on the student council and was a "Round Table" representative her senior year. That group of students meet each month with the board of education to exchange ideas.

Miss Saunders works part time at Green's Farm Market in Farmington Hills.

Beckenridge

MICHAEL BECKENRIDGE, 37, decided to run for a one-year term following recent board decisions on high school boundary changes.

"I live in the Westlake Subdivision and figured after the board's 7 to 0 decision on an alternate boundary proposal offered by residents, I could have done a better job," he said.

"The board gave us strictly lip service. I think a better job could have

been done," said the Farmington Hills resident.

Beckenridge is married. His two sons attend Farmington public schools. He is employed by General Motors as an electrician. A former banker, he served on the American Institute of Bankers Board for one-and-a-half years.

Shiece

INCUMBENT SHPIECE, 22, is running unopposed for another four-year term. A graduate of Harrison High and Wayne State University, Shpiece is currently working on a master's degree in public administration.

"Four years ago, I said it was time for a change. Now I say there is no substitute for experience," Shpiece joked.

"I hope I've shown some degree of ability to understand things that have come before the board and acted in a reasonable manner.

"I think we're handling school closings better than other districts. And in the past four years, there has been consistent increases in programs despite tighter funds."

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LOOKING FOR A WINNER

That's what C.J. Risak is looking for in this town. See what sports reporter Chuck Risak has to say about winners and losers after having a chat with some Detroit Express soccer team representatives.