

Unanimous approval given housing program

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington Editor

Senior citizen and low-income housing in Farmington Hills came one step closer to reality this week.

In a unanimous vote, the city council voted to introduce zoning changes for the 11-acre site at Drake and Freedom roads which would allow construction of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)-financed project.

The meeting, chaired by Mayor Earl Oppert, was dominated by resi-

dents' comments, both pro and con, over whether the 126-unit project should be built. Speakers, including council members, were restricted to three minutes each when commenting on the program.

HALF OF THE UNITS would be used for senior citizens, while the other half would be used for persons considered to have low or moderate incomes. People with incomes as high as \$15,000 could be eligible.

The units will be one and two stories. Of particular surprise to many was

the zoning support of Councilman Joe Alkateeb. The first-term city legislator opposed implementation of the controversial senior citizen zoning in the past.

He has fought to have the zoning stipulation be put on the ballot for voter approval. While a private citizen, he fought against adoption of the zoning.

But this week, Alkateeb supported it. He said that in order to get senior citizen housing, low-income housing also must be taken into account to make it feasible. Alkateeb, previously, suggested the city fund its own housing project, but it was found that the city couldn't foot the bill on its own.

"I shared your fears, I would oppose it," Alkateeb told the project's opponents in attendance.

People who oppose the housing expressed concern over the possibility that property values may drop if such a project is built at Freedom and Drake.

But the wind was taken out of opponents' sails earlier this year when the proposed project was reduced from six stories. Alkateeb had feared that implementing senior citizen housing under the 60-foot height limitation would

open the door to other developers who would challenge the zoning's legality.

SENIOR CITIZEN zoning in Farmington Hills is divided into two parts—RCE and RCE-1. Under RCE-1, senior housing could be built to a height of 60 feet. Under RCE, the height is limited to 30 feet.

Councilwoman Jody Soronen, also a past critic of senior citizen zoning, also supported the introduction.

"We have done our homework. I get a little distressed when people get up

here and ask if we've even seen the property," she said.

"The bottom line is that if we want senior citizen housing, we must go with the low income. We can't change it. We have no place else to look," she said.

Councilwoman Joanne Smith said adoption of the senior citizen and low-income housing project was a matter of looking at the entire community.

"What happens in the south end harms the north end," she said.

"We want to clean up the zoning and tear down the bad housing."

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Youngest board president

Shpiece tapped as board chief

By MARY GNIEWEK

When the gavel hits the table at the next Farmington school board meeting Aug. 7, newly presiding leader Michael Shpiece, 22, will have the distinction of being the youngest school board president in Michigan.

Shpiece was unanimously elected by his peers, many of whom are old enough to be his parents, on July 3. That was less than a month after he was re-elected to his second four-year term on the board in June.

Despite his youthfulness, Shpiece is the second most senior person on the seven-member board. Just behind Emma Makinen who has six years experience.

Even before he began serving as a teenage trustee, he was a regular spectator at board meetings.

"The first meeting I attended was on behalf of my school," he recalled. "I was in ninth grade and on the student council. We were trying to get money for wrestling mats."

The first taste of local school politics left Shpiece craving for more. He was a leader in the fight for a student advisory seat on the school board in 1971. That proposal flopped but the board created a student "round table" as a substitute.

In that program, two students from each district high school are selected to

meet with three trustees each month for open discussion. Shpiece was on the round table his junior and senior years at Harrison.

HE WAS ALSO in debate and forensics and held offices ranging from vice president to student council president his senior year.

There wasn't much time between high school graduation and election to the school board.

"My first term I began as the underdog. Six people were in the race and we were up against an incumbent, Ann Rodewig."

"Lots of hard work was involved in that race."

He remembers getting flack from other trustees his first year.

"I don't think it concerned my age. It was because I was taking very different positions from everyone else. They attacked me on the basis of age, but the attack was really on me. That subsided after the first year."

Shpiece is proud of his perfect attendance record and the strides the school board has made in recent years.

If you look at our record over the past couple of years, we have not been stagnant. We've made tremendous progress in early childhood development, the computer program, the low student-teacher ratio (26 to 1 in ele-

mentary, 25 to 1 in high school).

"The \$2 million bond has done wonders improving our facilities and allowing us to buy equipment."

"There's been improvements in the intellectually gifted and special education programs."

CONCURRENT WITH his first term, Shpiece whipped through a regular four-year bachelor's degree program at Wayne State University in just over three years. Though he wasn't much on campus politics, he picketed the WSU Board of Governors with other Monteth College students in an unsuccessful attempt to keep that school from being phased out.

For 15 months, he worked as a paid legislative assistant State Rep. Joe Forbes, D-Oak Park. And he actively campaigned to get State Sen. Doug Ross elected last year.

Though politics is his hallmark, Shpiece isn't sure what he wants to do 10 years from now.

"I really don't know," he shrugged. "I'm prepared to make another four year commitment here. I'll abide by that. Beyond that, I don't know."

The new board president has other coals in the political fire. He's currently a graduate assistant at WSU's Institute of Gerontology where he is working on a master's degree in public administration.

His work there collecting data is aimed at implementation of public policy to benefit the elderly.

Shpiece, the eldest of three children, lives with his family in Farmington Hills.

He talks enthusiastically about the coming year he will spend as board president.

"I THINK the major issue will be implementation of the middle school," he said.

That plan will phase out junior highs and offer sixth through eighth grade middle schools and four-year high schools in its place.

"This will be the first year in a few that the major issue is curriculum, not finance or school closings."

Shpiece foresees "hard negotiations" with the Farmington Education Association, the union representing the district's teachers now bargaining for a new contract.

"I think it will end in an agreement fair to both sides. We have to maintain reasonableness and a realization that we must work together for the kids."

He is complimentary of his board peers, where the next one closest in age is 10 years his senior.

"It's a hard-working board more concerned about education than personalities. We work well together."



Mike Shpiece, 22, recently became the youngest school board president in the state. Although young, Shpiece is second in seniority on the seven person board. (File photo)

Cab fare hike OK'd by council

Cab fares will catch up with gasoline prices when a two-step cost increase for the Yellow & Red Cab Co. approved by the Farmington City Council goes into effect next month.

The first step will hike initial meter charges from 80 to 90 cents, and waiting time fees from \$8 to \$9 an hour. The basic fare will continue at 90 cents a mile until the second rate increase is implemented in September.

Then the standard meter fee will rise to \$1, and the fare will be \$1 a mile, with a \$10 an hour waiting time cost to customers. That translates to 15 cents for every minute a customer keeps the cabbie waiting.

"I really did goof by not raising my rates sooner," said Yellow & Red Cab

Co. owner Vern Foster, who attended Monday's council meeting.

Foster said he has raised his fares since August, 1975. He attributed the hikes to gasoline prices and inflation.

Yellow & Red Cabs service Farmington, Livonia, Redford Twp., Garden City, Wayne and Westland.

In addition to Farmington, price hikes were approved in Garden City, Wayne, Westland and Livonia. Approval is pending in Redford Twp.

"Ninety percent of the business we get in Farmington is call business—not waiting business," Foster said. "This is a more expensive type of service."

A spokeswoman for the company said it dispenses 10 or more cabs a day to Farmington, depending on need.

Post office seeks bids

The U.S. Postal Service is again soliciting bids for construction of a new post office in Farmington. Bids submitted earlier were above budgeted cost and were rejected.

Portions of the proposed building were redesigned. Interested contractors may obtain new plans, specifications and bid documents from Louis G.

Redstone Associates, 28425 W. Eight Mile, Livonia, 48152. Bids close July 25.

The new building will be located on an 184,059 square foot site on Twelve Mile Road between Farmington and Orchard Lake roads. It will replace the present post office and annex.

Former pastor is new bishop

As Bishop Joseph L. Imesch prepares to assume new responsibilities as bishop of Joliet, Ill., he recently discussed his personal reluctance at leaving his hometown of Detroit and his views of movements within the Roman Catholic Church.

Imesch, 48, was pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church in Farmington when he was consecrated a bishop in April 1972.

He left the parish two years ago to become an assistant bishop in the Detroit diocese's northwest region which encompasses 31 parishes from Hamtramck to the thumb area.

"My six years at Sorrows turned out to be too short. I wasn't ready to leave when I left," he said.

"I'm sorry to leave here. My whole family is here. My roots are here."

He will leave on Aug. 28. Although he hasn't a set program to take with him to Joliet, he sees establishing a good relationship with the priests who work in the area's 110 parishes as "crucial for the life of the church."

Church life has changed in the 23 years Imesch has been in the priesthood, he says.

Its last 10 years have been marked by popes who have taken measures to become more visible to Catholics and by controversy over birth control and marriage within the priesthood.

IMESCH SEES these heated controversies as cooling down in recent years.

Abortion and contraception are not the heated issues they once were, according to Imesch.

"I'm not in favor of abortion. I believe that life is at the moment of conception. With regard to contraception it's not the issue it once was."

The coexistence of the couple is the final determinant in the matter of contraception, Imesch says. But he admits that many Catholics aren't satisfied with the church's position on the matter.

"It probably hurt the church," he said.



BISHOP JOSEPH IMESCH

Another issue within the last 10 years, allowing priests to marry has also cooled down.

"Priests marrying is not the issue it was although it is still an issue."

"It would be difficult for many parts of the world to accept married clergy. Italy, Poland and Spain would find it difficult."

Within the U.S., Imesch used the Polish community as an example of a group within the church which would show varying degrees of acceptance toward married clergy.

"I would feel fine (about married clergy)," Imesch said. "It's a possibility."

"THERE ARE MANY parishes positions which would make it difficult for a priest to be married and to justice to his parish and his family," he said.

The issue which Imesch would prefer the church focus on involves the spirit-

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inside

Now Is the Time To Call

Was today so busy that you forgot to call and place a classified ad for your used car? Don't worry, there is still time because now our phone lines are open until 7:30 every Thursday and Friday night. And, of course, you're still welcome to call during our regular business hours of 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call us now.

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Indian Disco

Stage make-up, Indian-style, is the motif for 25 young persons who are ready to stage their own summer production tomorrow afternoon. Barbara Yates will be among those performing. For story and pictures, turn to the Suburban Life Section. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)