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Horsing around

Springtime in Farmington Hills is enough incentive for this horse, boarded at a local farm, to take his inaugural dip in the swimming hole.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Hills forges ahead to gain federal bucks

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

In a 5-2 split decision, the Farmington Hills City Council voted to apply for HUD-funded Community Development Block Grant funds at an emotionally charged public hearing Monday.

If the city's application is accepted, Farmington Hills will receive \$417,000 from HUD for housing rehabilitation, public works improvements and rental assistance.

Mayor Pro Tem William Lange and former mayor Dennis Wolf failed to convince fellow council members the HUD program represents an economic gamble and a three-year commitment to the construction of new rental units.

The city targeted 42 rental units for construction by 1985 in its housing assistance plan, recently submitted to HUD as the first step in applying for HUD funds. The council has until April 30 to complete its HUD application.

In a roll-call vote following almost two hours of heated debate, the motion was made by council member Jan Dolan and approved by Mayor Jack Burwell, council members Charles Williams, Fred Hughes, Joann Soronen and Dolan with Lange and Wolf opposed.

THE ISSUE was considered so sensitive by city officials that Gary Stout, an independent development consultant, was flown in from Minnesota to clarify cloudy issues for council members during the hearing.

Stout was able to quell many fears by informing council members that:

- HUD's approval of Farmington Hills' application would represent only a proposal of the city's intention to complete the projects it has outlined — not a contract, and,

- although the city must comply with numerous federal regulations upon acceptance of the funds, the program has been largely deregulated.

Communities receiving block grant funds have greater control now than in recent years.

Lange and Wolf, however, remained unconvinced.

"In spite of what the president has done, we still have the regulations," Wolf warned. "The problem isn't with the \$400,000 — it's the new rental units we have to commit to."

"It comes down to an economic gamble. We could say look, we want the funds, and HUD just won't know we're around. But there will be commissions Mr. Mayor will have to appoint to show our good faith effort."

"I have to live with my own conscience, and the strings (federal regulations) bother me."

Although Williams personally opposes federal programs because of the lack of local control in their administration, he favors the return of federal tax dollars to the city.

"This program has been likened (by Farmington Hills resident Frank Bai, who spoke during the hearing) to applying for welfare. I don't believe that's the case," Williams said.

"About \$200 million goes to Washington from Farmington Hills each year. This program would represent the return of 1% of one percent of that. If we don't take it, someone else is going to get it."

HUD is unable to force Farmington Hills to do anything "that's not already the rule of the land," he added.

Stout said the city has little to worry about in light of recent drastic deregulation.

"In 1974, the program started out with no rules. Rule upon rule was added by accretion, and we went from inadequate regulation to excessive regulation. We're back now to where it's a little inadequate."

As Burwell views it, the Community Block Grant program represents "our own plan to upgrade the southeast portion of the city."

"I've been accused of being a sell-out on this, but I don't think we're married to anything except our own proposal," he said.

"I think we can opt out if we wish after this year's expenditure. We're not importing people to reach a quota. We're benefiting people who can least afford to pay taxes — and \$417,000 is half a mill in taxes."

Public mixed on HUD

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

During what resembled a flashback to public hearings four years ago, Farmington Hills residents packed city hall this week to air their views on a recently proposed HUD-funded Community Development Block Grant.

While the council was divided 5-2 over the program, which would reap \$417,000 in federal funds, the majority of the gallery favored the grant.

Traditional HUD opponent Julian Hovanessian remained silent as many persons proclaimed ardent allegiance to the program. Most everyone who spoke was answered with resounding applause from the audience.

Last week, Hovanessian, president of Citizens for More Responsible Government, came out in favor of the grant. She said it represents "a different form

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Arcade law is 'new concept'

An amendment that would permit video amusement arcades as secondary uses in certain business districts was introduced at Monday's Farmington Hills City Council meeting.

If enacted Monday as scheduled, the ordinance would take effect 21 days later.

The amendment would not affect Tally Hall, The Broadway Market, McFrocks' Saloon or The Fun Factory, all of which have legally challenged the city's video machine ordinance.

It would affect restaurants, bowling alleys, indoor archery ranges, tennis courts, skating rinks and similar facilities containing at least 10,000 square

feet of gross floor area.

The amendment represents "a whole different concept that our ordinance did not address before," said Hal Rowe, zoning inspector for Farmington Hills.

Show Biz Pizza, a business interest similar to Keego Harbor's Chuck E. Cheese, introduced the concept to the city's planning commission.

Targeted towards the younger generation, Show Biz Pizza plans to create a festive atmosphere complete with an arcade, pizza, animated characters and elaborate birthday parties.

"This type of use wouldn't have fit into any place in our town. It was a comparatively new concept that had

some merit, and we should provide for it if at all possible," Rowe said.

"Our residents should be able to take advantage of this kind of entertainment."

Show Biz Pizza plans to construct a 11,000-square-foot facility at an as yet undesignated location in Farmington Hills.

Tally Hall and The Broadway Market are unaffected by the amendment since, unlike Show Biz Pizza — considered a "principal user" — both centers are comprised of as many principal users as there are restaurants and sep-

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Farmington lays out ground rules for cable

Farmington is the first of three communities to approve an ordinance governing a 15-year franchise agreement between the communities and MetroVision, Inc. of Atlanta.

The Farmington City Council approved the ordinance 3-0, with council members Richard Tupper and William Mitchell absent. The ordinance sets rates, provides regulations and specifies penalties for poor performance by the cable operator and procedures for rate increases after three years.

The two other cities in the tri-city

authority, Farmington Hills and Novi, are expected to vote on the proposed ordinance May 3.

Tom Bjorklund, manager of MetroVision's Redford Township cable system, said his company will be able to string cable on utility wires or underground 21 days after the last vote is published in the newspaper legal ads.

"It should take about six months from the date the contract is finalized to turn on our first customer," Bjorklund said. "It's approved by May 1,

by November 1 we should see our first customers served."

The contract specifies that MetroVision build its main studio and headquarters for the three-city system within 1 1/2 miles from the 11 Mile and Haggerty Road intersection. MetroVision has not acquired a site yet, Bjorklund said, but "we're looking at several sites in that industrial area."

METROVISION'S BID called for completion of the cable network by 18

months after the franchise ordinance is approved.

The bid sets aside an initial \$150,000 grant for local access programs produced and developed by local groups and individuals plus an annual grant of 2 percent of all gross revenues for community access broadcasts, or "narrowcasting" in the lingo of the medium.

A tri-city cable TV authority that would operate independently from the three city governments would administer those revenues.

Further, as in almost all cable fran-

chises, the cable company — in this case MetroVision — has agreed to donate 3 percent of its total revenues to the three municipalities annually. The breakdown will be based on the number of subscribers in each city.

The system will debut with a 56-channel capacity with the potential of doubling the number of available channels to 112 if 90 percent of the system's capacity is filled in the future.

Although the pay television rates charged to subscribers cannot, by law, be regulated by cities, MetroVision has promised in writing to freeze pay-TV rates for three years from the date the

franchise ordinance is finally approved.

THEREFORE, Home Box Office (HBO) offerings would cost a subscriber \$7.50 extra per month, as would The Movie Channel (TMC) option. The family-oriented Home Theater Network (HTN) would cost subscribers an additional \$4.50 monthly in the first three years.

Rates start at a basic package of \$2.45 per month, which gives a subscriber local commercial channels plus

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Cities unite to check flooding

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

In a display of civic cooperation, Farmington City Council Monday night voted to help finance a \$3.5-million three-city drain improvement project sought by neighboring Farmington Hills to alleviate flooding.

Following the provisions of the state drain code, Farmington Hills last December asked Farmington, Novi and the Oakland County Drain Commission to participate in an intra-county drain project to be financed by Chapter 20 Drain Bonds.

Negotiations between officials in the three cities and the Oakland County Drain Commission George W. Kuhn have been going on for the past four months to determine each governing

body's share of the total bill for improvements.

Farmington's share of the drain bill is estimated to be \$425,000 funded over a 30-year period by the sale of bonds. The selling of bonds to finance the project still must win the approval of the Michigan State Finance Commission.

The need for increased drain capacity and water retention basins was dramatically exhibited last fall when heavy rains forced the evacuation of residents of the Red Roof Inn and ruined more than \$1 million worth of cars belonging to Bob Sellers' Pontiac in the 10 Mile and Grand River area in Farmington Hills.

Problems are occurring along the path of the Tarabusi Creek which runs through Novi, Farmington and Farm-

ington Hills, according to engineers in the three cities.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST concerns involves drainage from the M-102 expressway north of old Grand River. But that problem is only one of several addressed by the large-scale project and each subdistrict has an effect, downstream, on other proposed renovations, said Robert Deadman, Farmington city manager.

"It is proposed that a large pipe be constructed under M-102 bringing the water directly to the Tarabusi Creek (and) that baffles which currently limit the flow of water under old Grand River (baffles which constrict the 72-inch-diameter pipes to 36-inches) into the city of Farmington be removed," Deadman said.

"When these two events occur, the

city of Farmington will have a flooding problem. The project, as proposed, should eliminate these problems," the manager said. "The project includes the construction of improved channelization in the Tarabusi Creek, the establishment of retention ponds within both cities and the construction of storm sewers."

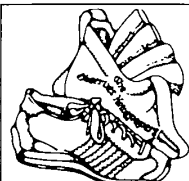
In Farmington there has been flooding problems in a portion of Bel Air subdivision and Floral Park subdivision — problems which Deadman hopes will be solved when three additional drainage districts are improved in the project.

FARMINGTON IS expected to pay a debt service charge of \$51,480 per year based on an interest rate of 11.5 percent, according to Deadman. The

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