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Arcade neighbors beef as city rethinks laws

By Craig Picchura, staff writer

With the planned mid-June opening of a pinball and video game arcade in the Farmington Plaza shopping center, city officials have decided to take another look at the existing laws pertaining to such establishments.

The new arcade will be called The Great Getaway Family Video Arcade and will be next to Cunningham's Drugstore. The center is located on Grand River at Moseley, and the arcade will occupy the spot formerly held by the Wyoming Western Shop.

Merchants in the struggling shopping center aren't welcoming the new tenants. Sheldon Korn, 33, of Farmington Hills and Alan Gottlieb, 33, of Southfield, with open arms.

Edward Winnicke, owner of the Modern Men's Shop, said tenants in the apparel business at the shopping center are afraid the arcade will drive adults away from their stores.

"I'm very much concerned I'll have to move my store," said Winnicke, a resident of Farmington. "I don't think my customers will put up with it. I expect we'll lose the whole apparel line in the center."

Winnicke, who has done business at the same location for 22 of the 24 years the center has been in existence, fears the arcade will "be like a magnet" for youths to congregate inside and outside the store. The mere presence of youths loitering outside the arcade, Winnicke said, will drive customers away.

KORN, THE CO-OWNER of the arcade, said he's known Winnicke for years and has listened to the tenants' objections. The fears are unfounded, Korn said, because he plans to run a "family-oriented fun center," not the modern-day equivalent of a pool hall.

"I got in the car with the landlord and showed him other arcades where there are no problems," Korn said. "There are not kids standing in front of the place or congregating in cars. As long as the place is run properly, you don't have those problems."

A youth must be at least 17 years old to enter the arcade without adult supervision, Korn said, under terms of the existing city ordinance. He said he'll strictly enforce the provision with a paid security guard. He'll also reward youngsters with a free game for an A or a report card, if the youth is accompanied to the arcade by his parent.

In response to the tenants' complaints, Korn noted that the landlord, M.E. Arden Real Estate Co. of Birmingham, would only grant him a lease that can be cancelled or renewed every 30 days.

The arcade's 36 amusement machines — including pinball, video and football games — should be in and operating by the second week of June, said Korn. A Coney Island restaurant won't open until September, he said, because county health inspectors must approve the site.

CITY MANAGER Robert Deadman said the arcade use is allowed in the shopping center because it is zoned C-3, the heaviest commercial shopping district zoning designation in the city.

City Council members are discussing the current city ordinance governing pinball and video games at tonight's 8 p.m. council meeting.

Deadman is recommending that any business that has pinball or video machines provide bicycle racks for the young patrons. Members of the community have complained to city officials about stepping over a pile of bikes at the entrance of Godmar Drugs in downtown Farmington.

Deadman is also asking City Council members to consider raising the fee charged to businesses with machines.

The city currently charges businesses \$35 for a game license, \$10 for the first machine and \$1 for every additional machine. Deadman compared that to the fee charged by surrounding cities, including the \$100-per-machine licensing fee charged by Farmington Hills, and said Farmington should consider raising the fee.

"Sir liquor licenses in this city generate \$5,000 for the city," Deadman said. "This is done so police will make inspections. That's the purpose of the fee. I think parents expect the police to keep a close eye on places where youth gather to see that they're above-board, honest and the children aren't being fleeced."



RANDY BORST/Staff photographer

Preparing to open its doors to the public, the Great Getaway Family Arcade is being greeted with less than an enthusiastic reception from its mercantile neighbors in the Farmington Plaza.

Please turn to Page 4A

Drinking foes vow to scrutinize cops and courts

By M.B. Dillon Ward, staff writer

MADD is off the launching pad.

After a handful of organizational meetings, the newly formed Oakland County chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving has elected officers, lobbied for legislation in Lansing, and presently is forming a court-monitoring clinic.

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen and Traffic Improvement Association Managing Director Bruce Madsen all have lent strong support since the national citizens' group expanded to Michigan.

Oakland County MADD officers include Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Martin Kroemer, president; Jon Moran, vice president; Cynthia Heisek, secretary, and Michael Ritener, treasurer. All are from the Farmington area with the exception of Ritener, a Troy resident.

THE RECENT DEATH of a close friend in a drunk-driving accident led attorneys Ritener and Paul Burns of Brighton to help establish MADD chapters and formulate plans for the court-monitoring clinic.

Wayne County MADD organizers Sue and Lee Landes of Livonia — whose late son George was Burns' best man and Ritener's classmate at the University of Michigan — have assisted both attorneys in their efforts. In fact Ritener credits the Landeses with getting MADD off the ground in Michigan.

Like MADD chapters throughout the country, the Oakland County unit seeks to follow drunk drivers through the system, noting the actions of police departments, prosecutors, attorneys and judges.

"The judicial system, however, can be a source of confusion for MADD members who in the past have had little contact with it.

"We want our people to give a professional appearance. My observation of what a lot of people do is that they become angry and upset, but they don't understand the system. It hasn't done well for them, and they tend to cause an uproar," said Ritener, who with Burns is drafting a booklet detailing the legal process through arrest, prosecution and adjudication for MADD.

Hopefully our clinic will educate people, satisfy their curiosity and enable them to gather information about the court process and about what particular prosecutors, judges and police departments are doing.

MADD's approach in the courtroom will be as low key and as fair as possible, he added.

"We're definitely not out to harangue or to harass," agreed Burns. "People want to get involved, and they have a good faith purpose in saving lives in the future. But they need to know how the court system operates."

If particular judges or prosecutors are found to be too lenient on offenders or acting in a way MADD considers "not in the public interest," they will be presented with the findings and statistics of MADD members, Ritener said.

"We want to correct the deficiencies in the system. We aren't going to single anyone out, unless we find there's someone abusing the system," he added.

"We're not out to lynch mob, but to educate and inform."

The first clinic, open to the public, is slated for 7:30 p.m. May 17 at the Naval Reserve Center on 11 Mile Road near Inkster.

Further clinics will be scheduled if response warrants it, Ritener said.

IN THE VIEW of the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County, a nationally recognized non-profit traffic safety organization, the court-monitoring clinic represents an

opportunity to increase the effectiveness of the system.

"We are very happy to see the MADD group form," Madsen said.

"The more citizen support, awareness and understanding of the problem, the greater will be the responsiveness of our officials in meeting that problem."

Developing grassroots support is

one of the great services MADD, RID (Remove Intoxicated Drivers), and similar groups offer, Madsen said.

"Everybody recognizes we've been very, very lax with drunk drivers. We could make great inroads if we were to bring about better and more enforcement of the laws we already have by utilizing grass-roots support.

Broken deal ruins tax increase

By Tim Richard, staff writer

A State Senate vote which last week created a personal income tax increase was a lot closer than 13 in favor and 23 against.

"They were really only one or two votes short," said Sen. Dana Wilson, D-Hazel Park, who has been in the upper chamber only a month.

Wilson could have been pressured, however, because he won a special election last month and hasn't received his committee assignments yet. But it didn't worry him. "Bill Faust (Senate majority leader) is very, very fair," Wilson said.

MAJORITY Leader Faust, D-Westland, brought the tax measure to a vote late Wednesday believing it had a chance of getting the 20 votes needed for passage.

Faust said he had an "arrangement" with Minority Leader Robert VanderLaan, R-Kentwood, by which the GOP would put up seven yes votes and the Democrats 12. The would make a 19-19 tie. Lt. Gov. James Bricker would break the tie by providing the 20th vote.

"I was told by the Republicans they thought they had their seventh vote," Faust said. "I had not only the 12th but a 13th vote. That's why we ran."

When the roll call votes are taken, senators press a button which turns a light on a big tote board — green for a yes vote, red for a no. The seven Republican green lights in Faust's words, never materialized.

When that happened, several Democrats switched their votes from green to red. The final tally was 10 Democrats and five Republicans in favor, 14 Democrats and nine Republicans against.

DOUG ROSS, D-Oak Park, whose 15th District includes Farmington and

Southfield, was the only Oakland County senator voting in favor of increasing the income tax to 5.5 percent from 4.6 percent for six months to raise nearly \$80 million and balance the budget.

Opposed besides Wilson were Donald Bishop, R-Rochester, whose 8th District includes Birmingham-Bloomfield, West Bloomfield and part of Troy; and Kerry Kammer, D-Pontiac, who is running for governor.

Ross had sought two conditions before he would vote "yes."

One was that state employees would have to share in the sacrifice by making pay concessions rather than accepting layoffs which would reduce state services. "I'm satisfied enough progress was made," said Ross, noting that 50,000 of the state's 62,000 employees have already agreed to concessions and 10,000 of the rest are still negotiating.

THE SECOND was to move the expiration date of the tax forward from Sept. 30 to Aug. 31, when the legislature isn't scheduled to be in session and couldn't renew it.

"People are skeptical about a 'temporary' tax," said Ross. He offered his amendment, but it was voted down.

"It failed because the leadership didn't want it to go back to the House," said Ross. If the Senate's version had been different, the House would have had to concur in the Ross amendment.

"But there's not a snowball's chance it would have been continued," he said.

Ross wasn't buying the argument of many voters that state government is like a family which should trim expenses when times are tough.

"The state isn't like a family. The state has responsibility for others. Do they want to take people home from the mental institutions or homes for the retarded, or assume the costs of Medicare?" asked Ross.

THE LEGISLATURE today was ready to look at a redistricting plan drawn up by Bernard Apol, a former state elections director appointed to draw up a new map by the State Supreme Court.

Once that's out of the way, lawmakers will turn their attention to balanc-

ing the recession-riddled budget — perhaps as early as Tuesday.

"I will not support a third vote" on an income tax," said Republican leader VanderLaan. "The democratic process has worked. We'll have to take a look at the alternatives: 1) to make deeper spending cuts... which many think unwise, and 2) to impose nuisance taxes, such as an advertising. Those might adversely affect the business climate."

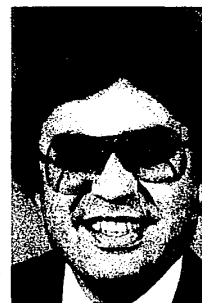
THE LEGISLATIVE maneuvering was being watched closely by schools officials. Oakland Community College vice president for business Anthony Jaron said OCC may have to increase tuition beyond the 5 percent increase already planned to 10 percent.

OCC plans to increase tuition April 22 from \$19.50 a credit hour to \$20.50. But Jaron said, the increase is "looking more and more like \$2 a credit hour."

Gov. William G. Milliken's budget-balancing executive order trimmed \$2.2 million in fourth quarter state aid from OCC's budget. The tax hike, if passed, would have restored it.

Jaron noted trustees at Henry Ford

Community College in Dearborn had raised that school's tuition by \$6 a credit hour — from \$21 to \$27 — and Schoolcraft in Livonia raised its rate \$3 — from \$22.50 to \$25.50.



Doug Ross

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Public hearing eyes market move

A public hearing will be conducted at 8 p.m. tonight in the Farmington City Council chambers to hear community views on the proposed plan to rezone land at Farmington Road and Nine Mile for a Farmer Jack shopping center.

The Farmington Planning Commission voted unanimously April 12 to approve the developer's request to rezone 7.5 acres of land currently zoned for office and research use to a commercial C-2 zone which would allow construction of a shopping center.

City councilmen could have voted on the project at the April 10 council meeting but decided to withhold their vote until the public had another chance to express its opinion on the issue.

less-restrictive C-3 zoning designation. However, after merchants in downtown Farmington complained that two of the proposed tenants, ACO hardware and Perry Drugs, would duplicate businesses already operating in town, planners convinced the developer to scale down his project.

The anchor store in the center would be the 41,000-square-foot Farmer Jack supermarket owned by Borman Foods and would replace the 18,000-square-foot store located downtown. The center would also contain 10 smaller retail stores and a free-standing restaurant on the corner.

A petition drive organized by Joanne Fallenberg of Farmington seeks to prevent Borman Foods from receiving permission to build on the site in an attempt to "keep the firm's downtown Farmington store open."