

Library seeks autonomy question on ballot

By Craig Plochura
staff writer

Library officials hope to add a last-minute proposal to the Nov. 3 ballot locally which would make the library commission an authority with the power to place millage requests before a public vote.

Gordon Lewis, Farmington Community Library Commission president, says making the commission a legally recognized authority would clear up some ambiguities about its duties and reduce bureaucracy that currently surrounds the library system which serves Farmington and Farmington Hills.

"There is no one library district at the current time," Lewis says. "There are two different cities. If a library proposal passes in one city and fails in the other, it won't pass even if the margin (for passage) overall was larger.

The principal intent of the ballot proposal is to create a unified voting district for the library."

Privately, library officials and city officials doubt whether there is sufficient support to include the library authority question on the November ballot before the Aug. 14 deadline.

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FARMINGTON CITY Council is scheduled to discuss the matter at its Tuesday night meeting but Farmington Hills officials won't review the request until Sept. 13, the day before the deadline.

A special election in 1979 which asked voters in both cities to establish a library authority failed alongside another ballot issue which was overwhelmingly defeated asking voters to approve a 1.5 mill appropriation for the community library system.

Lewis notes that heavy absentee balloting in the special election of 1979 killed the two proposals — particularly the vote on establishing a separate authority to oversee the library.

Results show that the authority question won by 63 votes in the city of Farmington and lost by 264 votes in Farmington Hills. Absentee ballot request forms were sent to all senior citizens, Lewis says, resulting in close to 1,700 persons voting absentee in Farmington Hills and 700 going to the polls.

"It appeared that people who knew about the issue and went to the polls favored the issue," Lewis says. Persons who voted at the polls and not at home, Lewis says, represented a better cross-section of the electorate than the largely senior-citizen bloc that defeated it voting absentee.

ESTABLISHMENT of a library authority, Lewis says, would take the library commission out of its current netherworld where it really isn't a separate entity and it isn't part of either city exclusively.

"Our current legal status is somewhat nebulous," Lewis says.

While the cooperation that exists has helped smooth things out, Lewis says, there could be a situation where the library makes a request to place an issue on the ballot that one city approves and another rejects.

"They don't have to put (library questions) on the ballot," Lewis says. "At the current time, the city councils in each city decide what library proposals go on the ballot and what does not."

The library commission held a joint meeting Aug. 25 with representatives of both city councils where library officials expressed a desire to become an authority.

Lewis stressed that the tone of the meeting and the request was friendly, not one of confrontation.

The commission is comprised of four members: James Wibbey and Ernest Sauter of Farmington and James Ebel and Louis Carey of Farmington Hills. The library system currently operates under an annual budget of \$1,190,713 which expires June 30, 1983.

Golf course given clean bill of health

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corner of Inkster and 13 Mile in Farmington Hills.

Concerned homeowners in the southwest corner of Franklin near the club have been waiting anxiously to find out what substances were actually in the barrels, their toxicities and whether they may have leaked into the wells that supply their water.

IT WAS UNCLEAR Friday whether the Michigan Health Department, which sampled water in a well at the country club at the time of the excavation, would sample any private wells in Franklin.

None of the chemicals found in the barrels was found in the water sample taken from the well at the country club,

said John Hesse, chief of the Center for Environmental Health Sciences in the health department.

"At this time there doesn't seem to be any danger of the wells being contaminated," said Hesse.

"We (health department) would be happy to follow through and do private well sampling if there was any indication that the ground water could be contaminated." But there is no such evidence, he added. The DNR was informed of the possible chemical dump by striking Franklin Hills greenskeepers. After the DNR failed to locate the suspected site on its own, it asked the country club to identify it.

Country club officials hired a construction firm to open the pit and remove the barrels under the direct supervision of the DNR.

After the samples were taken, the drums, other debris found in the hole and 25 yards of earth — all that would have been contaminated by the leaking barrels — were removed by an industrial waste hauler to a licensed disposal site.

Concern mounted in Franklin Village as soon as word of the discovery and excavation spread. The village office began receiving calls from many residents requesting that their wells be tested. Others wrote letters to the state arguing quick action in analyzing the barrels.

"It's kind of frightening," resident Dee Lynne, who lives near the dump site said at the time. "Nobody wants to think their water's been poisoned."

THE DNR, through Laird, revealed

Friday that the state had tested the samples for 13 different substances after going over the list of items the greenskeepers said was buried on the grounds.

Found were:

- The 2,4-D herbicide. It was found in one barrel in the amount of 3,400 parts per million — considered a high concentration of that substance.

- The herbicide Silvex found in one drum in the amount of 3.9 parts per million — considered only a trace amount.

- The herbicide 2,4,5-T, which is similar to 2,4-D, found in one drum in the amount of 1.4 parts per million — considered a trace amount.

- The metallic element zinc found in one drum in the amount of 28 parts per million — considered a trace amount.
- The metallic element arsenic found in one drum in the amount of 2 parts per million — considered a trace amount.

TESTED FOR and not found, according to Laird, were the metal elements cadmium, chromium, copper, nickel, lead and mercury.

Two separate scans were done for pesticides, said Laird, "and we came up with nothing."

Mercy eyes senior housing

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"Hey, it's gorgeous but there's a lot of property here that could be more intensively developed and still fit in with the neighborhood. I think they'd rather see that here than seeing the property sold to somebody else."

George Schneider, president of the

adjacent Farm Meadows Improvement Association, was at the meeting to hear plans. He said already rumors are rampant about high-rise senior housing on the grounds of Mercy Center.

"We don't know much about the plans," Schneider says, "but already somebody's been talking about a high-rise, multi-story type thing."

His wife interjects that the word used was "world headquarters which comotes big."

Questionnaire answers are due Sept. 30 and project directors say the responses will form the recommendations which will be announced to the public by Oct. 30.

City seeks opinions

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ferent plans call for different size pipes at varying costs.

If the city council elects to install new pipe only in the lowest spot, Deadman said, persons living upstream who

discharge waste into the system "could be assessed for the future capacity" of the improved sewer line.

If the council decides to build a whole new separated sewer system in the 100-acre area, Deadman said all residents would be assessed on an equal basis.

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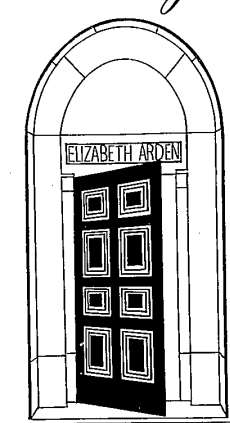
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