

# Donning city officials' hats

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

Farmington Hills city officials caught a comic glimpse of themselves Tuesday as they watched high school seniors take council members' places during a mock legislative session on Student Government Day.

In preparation, Harrison and North Farmington seniors observed an actual city council meeting Monday and later were briefed by their professional counterparts on issues currently facing the city.

Mayor-for-the-day Peter Ceplecha of North Farmington conducted roll call from Farmington Hills Mayor Jack Burwell's seat. Only the acting mayor pro-tem, Timothy Smljelaki of Harrison was absent. (He was attending football practice.)

**THE MEETING** itself bore some resemblance to a football game. Students battled over strategies on 12 Mile Road's state of disrepair, sidewalk construction and possible purchase of the Spicer property for a city park. (Farmington Hills is considering the purchase of a 210-acre parcel bordering Farmington Road between 10 and

11 Mile, owned by Nick Spicer.) The acting mayor proposed widening 12 Mile "to help business. There are unemployed people in Farmington, but 95 percent of the people are rich. They're well off and can afford the taxes for it," he said. Daniel Sperling of North Farmington, posing as a citizen, disagreed. "I'm proud to say I come from a community that doesn't have buildings higher than five stories like you see along Eight Mile and Woodward. Farmington Hills is a down-to-earth historical place.

"I want to live in a city, not a metropolis." North Farmington's Darryl Smith, also citizen-for-a-day, grew tired of listening to proposals concerning 12 Mile's fate. "I want to see some action, not just a bunch of you sitting up there looking cute."

The acting mayor then made a motion to table the matter, which the council unanimously approved. The council's inaction regarding the sidewalk construction along major mile roads provoked acting citizen Mark Pyko of Harrison.

"Farmington is made up of a bunch of little squares," he explained. "This policy we're discussing would make everyone within each square mile pay for four sidewalks, one on each mile road surrounding them—except for the people on the outskirts of town.

"IF THEY can pay for 12 Mile, they can pay for this."

Smith saw little merit in the program. "This is slightly on the ridiculous side. May I present to you the case of Drake Road between 13 and 14 Mile Roads? That's a dirt road with nothing but a lot of trees.

"Why not put sidewalks on 13 Mile on the way to North Farmington and on the way to Harrison? It's a waste to put sidewalks out in the boonies where they won't be used.

"Don't table this," he urged. "Be reasonable, not ridiculous. I propose the council take a vote on this."

Council members unanimously agreed to refer the matter back to staff for further study, but not before the acting mayor challenged Smith.

"WE'LL ALL end up walking on

them (sidewalks) so let's just tax everybody. We're rich," said Ceplecha.

"We'll pay for it with taxes."

Heated debate preceded the council's decision to begin negotiations with the owner of the Spicer property.

The acting Director of Public Services Diane Spelley of North Farmington opposed the plan, proposing that money be allocated to correct flooding problems in Section 38.

"This is the last large open area remaining in the city. If we don't buy it, we'll lose it.

"The land will become an industrial park if we don't buy it," agreed Spelley.

**SMITH SIDED** with the director of public services.

"We have a park in Farmington, and athletic fields that are seldom used. If you want to table something, this is it."

Acting as a citizen, councilmember Jody Soronen asked "do you realize how many times you've proposed to dig into my pockets today?"

"I don't want you spending my tax dollars on sidewalks or a park. I won't use them. And I'm speaking for boards of people."

"We've taxed the feathers off of 'em. This is an affluent community but it's still hard to make ends meet. Let's forget about this parkland till better economic times."

Acting citizen Bruce Scanlon of Harrison lost his patience with Ceplecha when the acting mayor proposed to table the matter.

"THE PURPOSE of the government is to govern. If you don't do anything, you're just using up tax dollars."

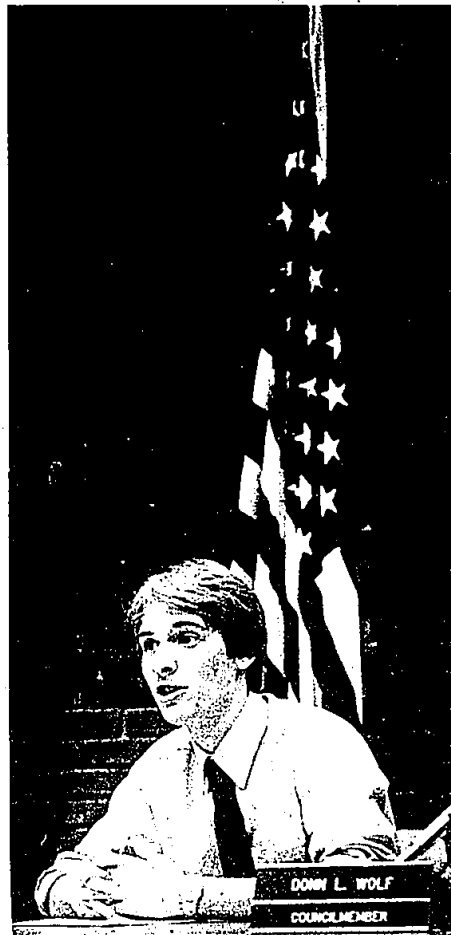
Contested Ceplecha: "Do you want me to be Communist and say no, you can't have it?"

The mayor then made a motion, which was defeated, to take up the matter as old business at a future meeting.

Upon adjournment, City Clerk Floyd Cairns predicted students' attitudes will change in the future.

"Just wait until they're paying taxes. We'll hear a different story," Cairns said.

Student Government day was jointly sponsored by the Farmington Elks Lodge 1988 and the Rotary Club of Farmington.



It was Peter Ceplecha's job as mayor-for-the-day to make peace of the mayhem that arose as acting citizens and councilmembers haggled over issues on its agenda.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Mark Pyko of Harrison played the part of an irritated resident at the mock City Council meeting on Student Government Day.



Emerson Coates, a government teacher at Harrison (above), sat in on the council meeting after taking in a speech by soccer's Sonny Van Arnum, luncheon guest for Student Government Day. While Harrison senior Linda Wank (right) spent the day as an acting city council member, classmates assumed the roles of district judge; court administrator; police and fire chief; Department of Public Works Superintendent; city manager, and other city officials.



North Farmington's William Brinker thoroughly enjoyed witnessing his government students play the parts of Farmington Hills City Council members.

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