

Farmington Observer

Volume 84 Number 14

Monday, November 29, 1982

Farmington, Michigan

32 Pages

Twenty-five cents

©1982 Suburban Communications Corporation. All Rights Reserved

Council balks at controlling park property

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Farmington Hills' opportunity to develop a major recreation complex has moved a step further away from realization.

Property owner Nicholas Spicer, tired of waiting for city officials to make up their minds, has put his 211-acre site up for sale.

He listed the property on Oct. 25 with a real estate broker but waited until last week to post "for sale" signs on the property.

Spicer had approached the council shortly after his mother, Eleanor Spicer, died in June. Spicer offered the city first chance at purchasing the parcel.

"I listed it because I haven't heard anything from the city. I can't sit here forever with raw land," said Spicer.

The land is located near the Farmington Community Center north of 10 Mile and west of Farmington Road.

The asking price is \$15,500 an acre, or \$2,850,000, according to Mark Thomas of Weir, Manuel, Snyder and Ranke, Inc. The price tag represents a reduction from the \$20,000 per acre Spicer originally sought.

"We've had a surprising number of inquiries ready to go but there are no buyers and hence no homes. A mile further up the road there is an attractive brick-and-wood entrance heralding the Farmington Ridge subdivision. A sign nearby informs prospective customers that what is going in is 'Shackett-Built Homes - Quality Custom Builders For Over Fifty-Five Years.'"

Call the number on the circa-1979 sign and you get a recording telling you the number's been disconnected, no further information is available.

Sheldon Shackett built the \$160,000 house of the Anson family at 30450 Knighton in Farmington Ridge in June of 1981 when the interest rate — with

See Crackerbarrel, 8A

been looking into possible purchase of the land when an unappropriated surplus of more than \$1 million recently appeared on the city's books. The council appointed a study committee; however, that study group is delaying action until a decision is reached by the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.

The county's commission will learn in early December whether it will receive a state grant to help purchase of the property.

"We're encouraging the county (to purchase the property) for a number of reasons. We don't have a county park in the area, and we pay county taxes just like everyone else," said council member Don Wolf.

"We want (a park) badly for the community, and I think the county has the wherewithal and means to do it. We'd like some input into what goes into it, and I would think the county would welcome our ideas."

Council member Fred Hughes, to be installed as mayor in January, says everything "is going pretty much according to plan."

with the process. It's coming to the decision point with the county and potential funds from the Kammer (Land) Trust fund."

Hughes said short of outright purchase by the county, Farmington Hills could "make a decision to finance and develop the property" on its own or with the city of Farmington and the county.

The big thrust of the council's concern is trying to ensure the availability of the property.

Financing possibilities open to the city aside from use of its surplus include selling bonds and a third party land contract, Hughes added.

Mayor pro-tem William Lange said if "the county were to purchase the land and give it to the city, I would be in favor of developing it. At the very onset it could be used as a nature trail and a cross-country ski trail."

"But we're more or less watching the county's progress. If the grant (the county received) is less than what the purchaser would want, I'd question if the city would put in some money."

Lange said the issue should be placed on the ballot for a vote by Farmington Hills citizens if purchase would necessitate an increase in taxes. If the cost to the city were \$300,000 or under, the council should act independently, he added.

In the event the land is purchased by the county, Council member Jody Sorenson doubts the parks commission would let Farmington Hills develop it.

Please turn to Page 3

Barren streets mark landscape of these undeveloped subdivisions

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

They're called "dormant" subdivisions by city planning and zoning officials but they look like ghost towns to anyone living in one.

When interest rates began climbing in 1979 it's no secret that new housing starts plummeted to the point where they're almost non-existent in Farmington Hills. Building permits hit a high of 730 in 1979 but bottomed out to only 89 issued last year. The most glaring examples of the way the housing market dried up can be found by driving north on Hogarty between 12 Mile and 13 Mile.

First you'll find Farmington Brook subdivision. The only way to tell it's plotted as a subdivision are the winding

paved roads, the underground utility boxes and gas pipes sticking up from the ground. Lots for 125 homes are approved and ready to go but there are no buyers and hence no homes.

A mile further up the road there is an attractive brick-and-wood entrance heralding the Farmington Ridge subdivision. A sign nearby informs prospective customers that what is going in is "Shackett-Built Homes - Quality Custom Builders For Over Fifty-Five Years."

Call the number on the circa-1979 sign and you get a recording telling you the number's been disconnected, no further information is available.

Sheldon Shackett built the \$160,000 house of the Anson family at 30450 Knighton in Farmington Ridge in June of 1981 when the interest rate — with

20-percent down on a 30-year mortgage — was at 16 percent, according to Carol Anson.

NOTHING WOULD look amiss in a photograph of the colonial-style house — unless the photographer used a wide-angle lens.

The lawn looks neat as a pin but all around it are 475 undeveloped lots. The Anson's four children visit friends from the Walled Lake Schools but their nearest neighbors live almost a quarter-mile away in the subdivision.

"Before they couldn't build houses fast enough around here and now look at it," said Mrs. Anson. "I like the home. I like the area. I think the kids would like a few more neighbors but we've gotten used to it. I'll feel like they're intruding on my privacy when they start building again."

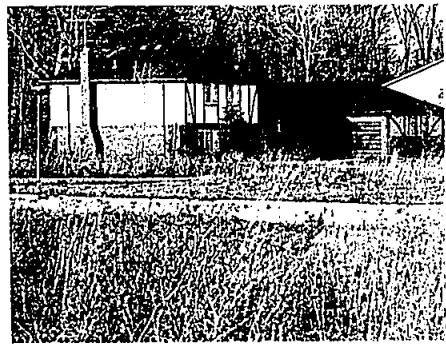
The Ansons moved to Farmington Hills from Avon Lake, Ohio, which is about 45 minutes west of Cleveland, due to a job transfer with Ford Motor Co.

They realize the timing couldn't have been worse but like almost everyone who recently purchased a home or hopes to, the Ansons are waiting for the mortgage interest rates to come down.

For the Ansons the magic number is 13 percent but for many potential buyers and developers the hope is that mortgage rates drop back down to 12 percent.

"People I talk to say if interest rates get around 12 percent we'll get some buyers," said Mrs. Anson.

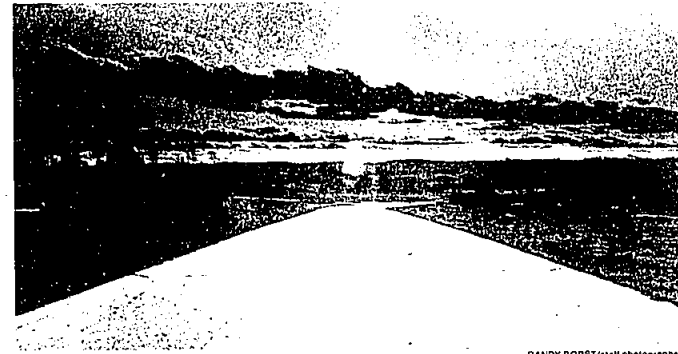
Please turn to Page 9



The few homes which have been built in the Farmington Ridge subdivision are occupied by residents who say solitude is a mixed blessing.



Garbage is strewn around the perimeter of an unnamed cul-de-sac in the sparsely-populated Farmington Ridge subdivision.



This was to be Lancaster Street in the Farmington Ridge subdivision, but bad economic times have courted this just among the many empty streets which dot city development.

Dispatcher presses forward on suit against city

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

A former Farmington Hills Police Department dispatcher has refused to accept a \$20,000 award from the Oakland County Circuit Court mediation board to settle a false arrest suit.

Gayna Willing, 23, was arrested at work Dec. 23, 1979 and charged with larceny over \$100, a felony carrying a maximum four-year prison term. Willing was tried and acquitted in Oakland County Circuit Court in October 1980.

Willing was charged with stealing \$900 from the purse of co-worker Kathy Bilis.

The Farmington High School graduate is seeking \$750,000 in damages, claiming she was falsely arrested and imprisoned in violation of her constitutional rights. Named in the suit are Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols, Sgt. Albert Hawner, Sgt. John Kohls and Officer Jane Kolesa. The case is expected to go to trial in the spring of 1983 before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Steven N. Andrews.

The City Council recently discussed whether to accept the award during an executive session before Willing rejected the offer.

"It's not enough, not for the suffering I went through," Willing said. It hardly

covers my attorney fees (\$18,000), and it has taken me a year and a half to find another job.

"I'm not asking for an outrageous sum, but a reasonable amount to cover the back pay, damages and all the time I was out of work," said Willing, who works as waitress while studying business data processing at Macomb County Community College.

"It's really hard. You can't even tell anyone what happened. It's such a long explanation that you have to get into detail. It really hurts."

"You never think it could happen to you, and when it does, other people don't understand the degradation, humiliation and agony — just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Willing charges that the police violated her civil rights.

"All they had to do was take off my patch, but they conducted a mass strip search, which is not normal police procedure, and took away my uniform," said Willing.

"They gave me a blue paper garment and marched me back down the hallway and locked me into the men's cell for four hours. There wasn't even a bathroom, just a stinky urinal."

"I was treated like an animal."

Willing holds an associate's degree in criminal justice and has not ruled out a return to police work.

"I was thinking seriously about police work when I was working for Farmington Hills, and I'd try it again," she said.

"In fact I've applied for security work with Volkswagen, Ford and Chrysler plants, and with private companies. They turned me down."

"At first I was telling them the whole story. Later I left it all out and just said I was going to school during the

time I worked as a dispatcher, which I was. That still didn't go over. I'm up a creek either way."

Nichols has denied that Willing's career in law enforcement is ruined.

"An arrest without conviction is not included in an employment record," he said.

Should the case go to trial, Willing's attorney Richard Amberg is confident of victory.

"The police would be very smart to settle this out of court. But if it goes to trial, we have an excellent chance of winning," he said.

Please turn to Page 4

Litter is handy for Goodfellows

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Santa works in mysterious ways. Some needy family in Farmington or Farmington Hills will eat well this Christmas because a 16-year-old split, six-pack of Miller's beer with his buddies in a fellow work.

"I was thinking seriously about police work when I was working for Farmington Hills, and I'd try it again," she said.

Students in the prize-winning class at Farmington High School used a bit of unconventional ingenuity in raising donations for the annual Goodfellow Canned Food Drive.

One of the students, nobody seems to

know just who, suggested combing the fields around an industrial park under construction on Halsted Road for empty bottles of beer left behind by underage party-goers.

Students say the location is a prime spot for impromptu beer parties. Many who party at the location leave deposit bottles behind which were claimed by students in Tom Krupka's fourth-hour physics class during the canned-food drive.

Due to their efforts in collecting empties, as well as the more traditional

what's inside

Community Calendar 4B
Editorials 8A
Obituaries 2A
Shopping cart Section B
Sports Section C
Suburban Life 5B
NEWSLINE 477-5450
WANT ADS 591-0500
HOME DELIVERY. 591-0500

SOLD!

R. Tonarelli placed an Observer & Economist classified ad to sell a snowblower. "Sold the snowblower on first ad I'm still receiving calls!"

One call does it all!



591-0900

Use your MasterCard or Visa