

# Farmington Observer

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## Housing project edges step closer to reality

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

ders Roger Peck Chevrolet.

Five-year waiting lists at area senior citizen homes will shrink if the plan of a Farmington Hills auto dealer is realized.

Roger Peck, owner of a Chevrolet dealership, is applying for HUD funding to construct a 900-unit condominium village for senior citizens in Farmington Hills.

If his request is approved, 178 units will be constructed on a 7.6 acre site fronting Nine Mile and Tuck Roads south of Grand River in the first of a two-phase development.

The remaining units will be built with private funding on an adjoining 32-acre parcel, currently the site of the Grand River Drive-In. Peck holds an option to purchase the land, which bor-

In December, Peck requested that the City of Farmington Hills form a non-profit corporation to serve as a sponsor/mortgagor for the HUD development. Wary Council members referred the matter to city administrators who at Monday's legislative session said Farmington Hills is prohibited by law to comply with the request.

"As it turns out, this is the very same program that has been utilized by the Detroit Baptist Manor in the development of its senior citizen project that is currently under construction at the corner of Drake and Freedom Roads in our city," said City Manager Lawrence Savage and Assistant City Manager William Costick in a report to the council.

"While it is necessary using the HUD

Section 202 Program to have as sponsor/mortgagor a non-profit housing corporation, the City or any of its elected or appointed officials are specifically prohibited from being the sponsoring agency. A group similar to the Baptist Manor such as a church or other non-profit association or corporation would be an appropriate group."

Misinterpretation of HUD guidelines caused the mix-up, said Peck, who already is organizing an alternative sponsoring agency.

"We are going to form a group of residents not to exceed five. We know pretty well who they will be, and we'll apply for tax-exempt status through them," he said.

The group, which by law must be comprised of Farmington Hills residents, officially will be named the

Farmington Hills Non-profit Housing Corporation.

Peck says his proposed senior citizen village has been termed by U.S. Sen. Carl Levin a potential "showpiece for the nation."

In-house stores and shops, walking paths, a duck pond, courtyards and greenbelts would render the development a departure from typical senior citizen complexes "built with one cinderblock wall running the length of the building," he said.

The car dealer is pursuing a HUD-funded senior citizen complex in lieu of a potentially more profitable development because "the money is there. It's not there for private funding."

Agreed attorney Whitbeck, a former HUD regional director who is assisting Peck, "after all the recent cutbacks,

the only new construction dollars available are in connection with senior citizens."

Although Peck is "99 and nine-tenths percent sure" his HUD application will be granted, Whitbeck isn't as optimistic.

"Competition is very tight for 202 dollars," he said adding that applicants are carefully screened to ensure their compliance with HUD criterion. Prospective recipients must be community-based, charitable and non-profit, tax exempt, and financially stable.

Farmington Hills City Clerk Floyd Cairns already has received applications from senior citizens interested in living at the proposed complex.

His list and those "at other senior citizen residences are five years long that indicates there's a need out there."

"I just hope Mr. Peck pursues this. I think it's a fine idea," said Council member Jerry Soronen. "I'm a little reserved this city will not be involved," she added. "I've never been entirely convinced the charter tells us to be involved in this sort of thing."

Former Mayor Jack Burwell expressed support for the proposal, and concern about necessary rezoning of the involved property.

"Whenever we get around to rezoning, I wouldn't want to rezone - let the land sit there and then have the whole deal fall through," Burwell said.

Community activist Aldo Vagnozzi said "all you have to do is look at the long waiting lists at other places to realize how great the need is."

"The city will be asked at some point to give its blessing, and I hope your response is favorable."

## Cities plagued with lawsuits from public

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

In 1973, two attorneys - Paul Bibeau and the late Terry Brennan - handled Farmington Hills' legal matters.

Brennan, Bibeau & Foehman has since grown to include five attorneys, a paralegal and a secretarial staff, necessitating a move from its offices in a converted house on Middlebelt to its new confines on Northwestern Highway in 1978.

A burgeoning caseload has accompanied them.

The city attorney report submitted to Farmington Hills city council members this month lists 62 ongoing cases now pending in Circuit Court, U.S. District Court, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Michigan Tax Tribunal, and the workers compensation bureau.

Bibeau counts 23 of them as cases opened in 1982. Only five were filed in 1981.

ROBERT J. KELLY, an attorney who for 20 years has represented Farmington and the Farmington School District, notes an increase in negligence cases.

"More people are suing, and the big awards and big judgments are the main reason," he said.

A total of about \$25 million in damages is being sought by plaintiffs suing Farmington Hills, which now is covered fully by an outside insurance agency. At one time the city was self insured.

Nearly \$130,000 is budgeted for the current year by Farmington Hills to cover legal expenses. The figure breaks down to a \$45,200 legal retainer, \$27,600 for prosecution; \$42,000 for court defense, \$15,000 for labor relations, and \$1,000 in miscellaneous expenses.

The upsurge in lawsuits is a trend extending beyond the Farmington area, according to Professor Larry Dubin of the University of Detroit School of Law.

"There is an increase in lawsuits in general under the caption of what would be termed civil litigation. Maybe it can be explained as a result of the fact that there are more lawyers practicing, or as a result of hard economic times."

"People are resorting to lawsuits as a means of compensation," said Dubin.

At present, in excess of 21,000 lawyers reside in Michigan - about double the number living here in the mid-1960s.

More than 1,000 lawyers passed the bar exam last July.

Please turn to Page 6



RANDY DORIS/staff photographer

Pamela Muncie, clinical coordinator of the alternative birthing unit at Botsford Hospital, straightens up the delivery room. Muncie is on

call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist with deliveries.

## Family welcomed

## Hospital strives for personal touch

By Mary Klemic  
staff writer

The modest but pleasant room looks like any other guest room or bedroom. Stereo music floats through the air as you walk on soft carpeting past cushioned chairs to a nearby room with mint-green drapes and a flowered bedspread.

But this is not a typical bedroom. It's part of the alternative birthing unit in Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills.

The \$30,000 unit, six months in the planning, opens Sunday.

The staff at Botsford describe the unit as a safe alternative to home delivery and to what mothers-to-be often see as the somewhat impersonal atmosphere of the "traditional" hospital delivery room.

"Here childbirth is more of a personal experience and maybe a little less frightening," said Pamela Muncie, clinical coordinator of the alternative

birthing unit. "Giving birth is a real emotional thing, a personal thing. This meets some needs. It's real tranquil and they can bring who they want here."

Added Jonathan Cox, director of nursing service and obstetrics at Botsford: "They want the safety of a hospital setting, but want the home environment too."

With the birthing unit, Muncie said mothers-to-be and families have a chance to plan many aspects of a child's birth. This includes who will be present when the baby is born and what will be done at the time of birth. Such planning is done in a series of meetings the mother-to-be has with Muncie. Similar units are at Providence, Grace and Beaumont Hospitals.

"I think this is going to be a trend," Muncie said. "People are more informed now. They want to know. They want (childbirth) to be natural, and they want to be included, not put to

sleep and then have someone say, 'Here's your baby.'"

Cox and Muncie said Botsford's unit was designed to resemble a home environment. There are three rooms - a sitting room with a small sofa and chair, a bathroom with a water massager in the shower and a bedroom. The mother-to-be can bring favorite albums to play on a stereo. The bed can be raised easily so that the mother is sitting.

While the birthing unit gives a more personal touch than a traditional hospital, costs are kept the same, Cox said. "We are interested in the patient and the patient's comfort."

Muncie is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This enables the mother to have with her someone she knows when labor begins.

Because the mother goes through labor and delivery in the same bed, she doesn't need to be transferred to another room when delivery begins, Muncie said. The mother, she said, can also stay 12-24 hours longer in the unit than in hospitals without the unit.

Muncie said she telephones the

mother after she and baby go home to see how they are doing and to arrange a follow-up visit.

In the unit, both mother and baby can get oxygen from outlets hidden behind pictures on the wall. Supplies and other equipment, including a warmer that can be moved to the baby and emergency resuscitation equipment - are stored in a closed wooden "delivery table" which resembles a commode in a bureau and is behind drapes in back of the bed.

"It's all concealed so it doesn't look like a hospital environment," Muncie explained. "Many young mothers have never been in a hospital before, and they are terrified of hospitals."

But, she said, if an emergency should develop, the mother and baby would be taken immediately to the hospital's labor and delivery room, some 60 feet away. "There is immediate access," she said.

Muncie said requirements for those who want to use the unit are strict. It is only available to low-risk patients who

Please turn to Page 6

## Thief prepares early for next Christmas

Someone out there has their Christmas decor for 1983 ready for display, and Jerome O'Connor has every right to be yelling bah, humbug.

The Independence Green Apartments resident discovered Monday that his storage locker had been pried open and raided.

Missing are a \$50 ceramic two-foot Christmas tree, a \$50 artificial six-foot Christmas tree, Christmas lights valued at \$50, \$30 worth of hanging snowflakes, a \$30 two-foot hanging

Santa Claus, silk Christmas ornaments worth \$21, bells, bows and ornaments worth \$15 and a \$5 wreath.

Police found no signs of forced entry, but O'Connor believes the thief or thieves may have entered by removing screws that hold the latches to the door. Several of them appeared to have been tampered with, O'Connor told officers.

There are no suspects in the incident which is believed to have occurred between 3 and 6 p.m. Monday.

## oral quarrel

## Today is open line; tell us your gripe

You say it's getting too cold for your weary old bones, bubba? Yesterday you went to buy some fire wood, and the guy told you it was all gone for the winter. Is that what's bothering you?

Well, today's Oral Quarrel gives you the opportunity to sound off about anything your heart desires - good, bad or indifferent. None of that waiting on the phone line to a talk-show host. Just dial us up at 477-5498 and answer this question:

What's bothering you, Bubba? Tell us why.

You will have until 1 p.m. Friday to respond to this week's Oral Quarrel. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer for your answer.

If you have suggestions for future Oral Quarrel questions, drop a note to the Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.



Oxygen outlets are hidden behind pictures on the wall. There are two on each side of the bed, one for the mother and one for the baby.

## what's inside

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Community Calendar | 3B        |
| Editorial          | 14A       |
| Obituaries         | 4A        |
| Recreation news    | 8A        |
| Sports             | Section C |
| Suburban life      | 1B        |
| YMCA highlights    | 9A        |

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"My answering service was up in arms over the number of calls coming in. The response was excellent!" R. Roberts was pleased with the results of the Observer & Eccentric "Help Wanted" classified ad he placed.

**One call does it all!**

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