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Hills rejects Botsford expansion plans

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

When Botsford General Hospital officials drew up plans for a proposed \$11 million expansion project, they didn't expect opposition from the city of Farmington Hills.

But last Tuesday the city's zoning board of appeals denied a variance request that would have allowed the hospital to add two patient floors to the south tower, making it at least 80 feet tall — 20 feet taller than current zoning ordinances allow.

"We really did not expect any difficulty since we were going to match it to the existing (north) tower," said Gerson Cooper, hospital administrator.

Building new fourth and fifth floors on the south tower would provide the hospital with approximately 30 percent more room than the original north tower, built in 1965. Although some beds in the north tower would be closed, the additional new floors would offer 40 new beds.

But the project also calls for moving the lobby south of the existing entrance and adding three elevators, nurses locker rooms, expanded surgical and cafeteria areas. New visitors areas, patient solariums and examining rooms would be added, Cooper said.

"It will allow us to segregate patient traffic from visitors and from service (such as housekeeping and dietary)," Cooper added.

BECAUSE THE ZBA put a wrench into Botsford's plans last week, hospital officials are considering two plans of attack so the expansion project still can begin within 90 days.

"We are actually going to take a dual action," Cooper said.

The hospital's architects have already been asked to "take a fresh look" at plans so approximately 16 feet could be chopped off the height of the proposed expanded south tower. This could be done by removing mechanical equipment enclosed in a penthouse above the patient floors, Cooper said.

Although the ZBA granted the hospital a variance for the north tower's equipment penthouse when it was built in 1965, board members were following the ordinance which allowed buildings to be either 60 feet tall or five stories, said City Manager Lawrence Savage.

"They (the ZBA) were acting in accordance with the zoning ordinance at that time," Savage said.

But since that time, the hospital has been put in a special purpose (SP) zone which restricts building height to 60 feet, he said. The only way the hospital can follow through with its current plans is for city officials to change the zoning ordinance, Savage said.

But "there is nothing really official" until hospital officials formally request the zoning change, he added.

"We're going to look with city and planning officials at the potential of revising the ordinance," Cooper confirmed as a definite alternative to

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Downed wire causes blackout

By Diane Gale
staff writer

A sizzling electric wire, perhaps weakened by previous storms, fell to the pavement at the busy intersection of Grand River and Halsted last Thursday afternoon, causing a power outage in some of the Farmington area.

The line didn't fall on a passing automobile or pedestrian. It did, however, burn several holes in the pavement. No one was injured.

"It's more than likely the previous streak of storms could have done the damage," said Al Herst, supervisor of Detroit Edison crew 543, which replaced the line and restored power, explaining why the line fell on a clear day and without a car hitting the supporting pole.

Approximately 1,630 residents, as well as workers in local industry and commercial businesses found themselves without power after the wire fell at 2:30 p.m.

"I didn't see it, but another guy said it turned blue up there and started sparking," said Jeff Grames, who was watching the repair work.

The 30 feet of wire was replaced in a two-part series at 3:55 p.m. and 4:31 p.m.

Power was out in a wide swath along Grand River from approximately Halsted to the I-96 expressway, according to Ralph Merz, Detroit Edison director of customer and marketing services.

GUY DE PLACIDO, who manages the Shell service station at the corner, said he saw the wire fall.

"It looked like a phosphorus bomb exploding," he said. "It was unreal. It was just a matter of fate that no one got hurt."

Business came to a halt at many stores in the area. DIPlacido stopped pumping gasoline because his pumps are electrically operated.

An employee at a Kroger supermarket in the nearby Halsted-Grand River Shopping Center said the cashiers had to calculate bills without the help of cash registers after the electricity went off. Workers also covered the freezers with cardboard to save the frozen goods.

While Edison workers replaced the line, Jim Skrycki of the Farmington Hills Police directed traffic on northbound Halsted away from the intersection and through the shopping center.

"Luckily there weren't any cars around when it fell," Skrycki said. "Traffic is running smoothly. The biggest problem we have is just putting people out a little by rerouting them."

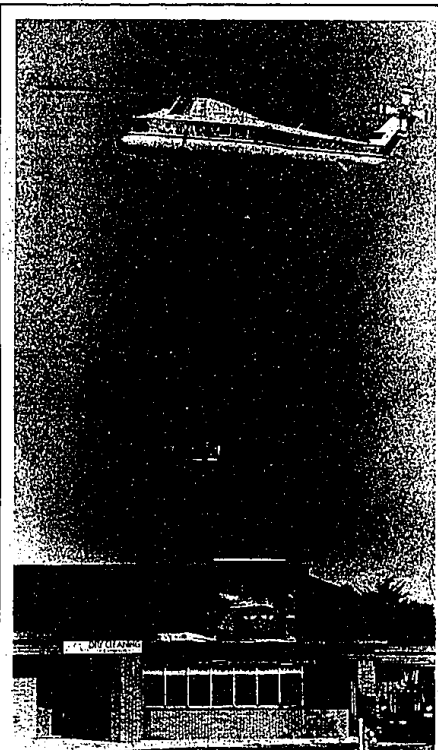
Some of the stores in the shopping center kept their power, which came from a different line.

"This has happened before in the center," said Arthur Underwood, manager of the Little Professor Book Center, who had power. "I didn't even know other people didn't have their lights until a customer came in and said, 'It's a mess out there.'"

Detroit Edison workers agreed that it's "extremely rare" for a line to come down when it wasn't storming and there wasn't an impact on the pole.



A Detroit Edison crew replaces a cable which had fallen at Grand River and Halsted Road last Thursday afternoon, causing a power outage in some of the Farmington area.



What a lift!
The Hunters Square Shopping Center at Orchard Lake and 14 Mile roads used a helicopter Friday to put the finishing touches on its newest tenant, a restaurant which will open in October. The helicopter was used to lift the air conditioning and heating units, each weighing more than two tons, onto the roof of the restaurant.

Republic youth held in slaying

By Margaret Neubacher
staff writer

Friends and neighbors of Rhonda Glover were shocked and saddened by the news of her murder last week.

Police began searching for the 16-year-old Garden City girl early Monday, Aug. 1, when her parents reported that she was missing.

Her nude body was found by Garden City Police Thursday afternoon in a heavily wooded area of Hines Park in Westland. Police said she had been struck repeatedly on the head with a blunt instrument.

Her clothing and bicycle were found nearby.

A 16-YEAR-OLD boy, who is being held in connection with Rhonda's death, led police to the body. The boy was on leave from Boys Republic in Farmington, a residential treatment center for troubled or problem youth, to visit his Garden City parents.

Police said he was an acquaintance of Rhonda. Police are attempting to

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Blanchard recall drive still alive

By Diane Gale
staff writer

The Recall Blanchard Committee plans to go to court to test the legality of the 90-day limitation on collecting signatures needed to oust the governor from office.

State law says that the petitioners must gather 780,000 valid signatures of qualified electors within a 90-day period.

The committee presently has about 500,000 signatures gathered between the end of March and the end of July.

The committee has hired attorney Gary Parker, who has filed a lawsuit in Oakland County Circuit Court against the Secretary of State challenging the constitutionality of the 90-day limit to collect signatures. A court date has not been scheduled.

"If the recall doesn't make it, it's because we don't have the workers to collect the names," said Brenda Kandt, one of two coordinators for Farmington and Farmington Hills. The other coordinator is Selma Sullivan, also a Farmington Hills housewife. The women said they will continue to collect signatures, at least until the case goes to court.

Parker said he will argue that the 90-day time period to gather signatures was a limit imposed by state legislators.

"WE'RE SAYING THAT they (state legislators) didn't have a right to do that," Parker said. "To change the constitution would require a constitutional amendment and vote of the people."

The 780,000 figure was arrived at by taking 25 percent of the number of voters in the last governor's election. Even if the committee doesn't collect the required figure by their new self-imposed deadline, which they say will be in a "couple of weeks," they see the petition itself as a representative message to legislators.

"I think they thought Michigan people laid down and played dead very well, and now they're realizing we can't stand it anymore and we're not going to let them get away with it anymore," Kandt said.

THE RECALL was initiated shortly after Gov. James Blanchard signed a 38 percent income tax increase into law. It went into effect May 1.

"I've never done anything like this before. I've been a housewife and mother, and I've been paying bills for the past 20 years," Sullivan said. "But I was appalled by the tax increase."

"I hate to see it get to the point of a lawsuit, because I think it might get caught up in the courts for a long time."

Sullivan said the committee hasn't "given up the fight" and it's going to continue collecting signatures even if its only purpose is to let the state legislators and governor know the taxpayers are unhappy with the tax increase.

Workers are targeting the out-county area to collect signatures, Kandt said.

The approximately 40 volunteers working on the committee in Farmington and Farmington Hills are the petitioners and governor know the taxpayers

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