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Twenty-five cents

Law cramps developers' innovations

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmingington Hills developer and former builder Frank Winton says the city's new downzoning ordinance will prevent innovation in the building industry.

"The ordinance prevents the use of new designs, new concepts and new materials," said Winton, an executive board member and former vice president of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan.

"We cannot be innovative because of this ordinance."

The association represents 1,300 builders and developers. Under the new single family construction review ordinance, adopted Aug. 15 by the Farmington Hills City Council, a builder's plans for a new single-family house may be nixed if certain design and size standards are not met.

The new housing regulations are expected to cause homeowners' worries about downzoning — building smaller houses of lesser quality in unfinished subdivisions having larger, more expensive homes.

But builders will be restricted to building homes that are compatible in size, design and type of materials used with existing homes in the neighborhood.

"If all the houses were brick next door to the new house under construction and close by, and we wanted to put up wood siding, there may be a question that that would not be allowed," which will cost a builder more expensive than brick.

"We can't build something that is not exactly the same, yet we are stopped from anything too dissimilar."

According to the ordinance, a building permit, which will cost a builder \$40, will not be issued for a single family house unless the city's designated building review officer determines the proposed home would be in compliance

with the regulation's size and architectural standards.

That means a new house must be at least 75 percent of the floor area of homes within 750 feet (in all directions) of the new house. Put another way, the new house can only be 25 percent smaller than nearby homes.

This requirement places a burden on builders, Winton said.

Before applying for a building permit, he said, a builder must assess the square footage average of all homes within the 750 foot limit.

"He (the builder) may not have access to those homes so he'll have to go to the (city) assessor's office and get the tax bills," he said.

Although getting the tax bills is a simple task, Winton said, the burden becomes greater because the builder most likely will have to "revamp his original concept to satisfy the requirements of the ordinance."

For example, if the average square footage of homes within 750 feet of the proposed house is 3,000 square feet, then the builder has to modify his plans so the new house is no less than 2,250 square feet.

The straw breaking the builder's back, Winton said, is that a builder, after purchasing property from a developer and designing the homes he wishes to build, is never assured of being issued a building permit.

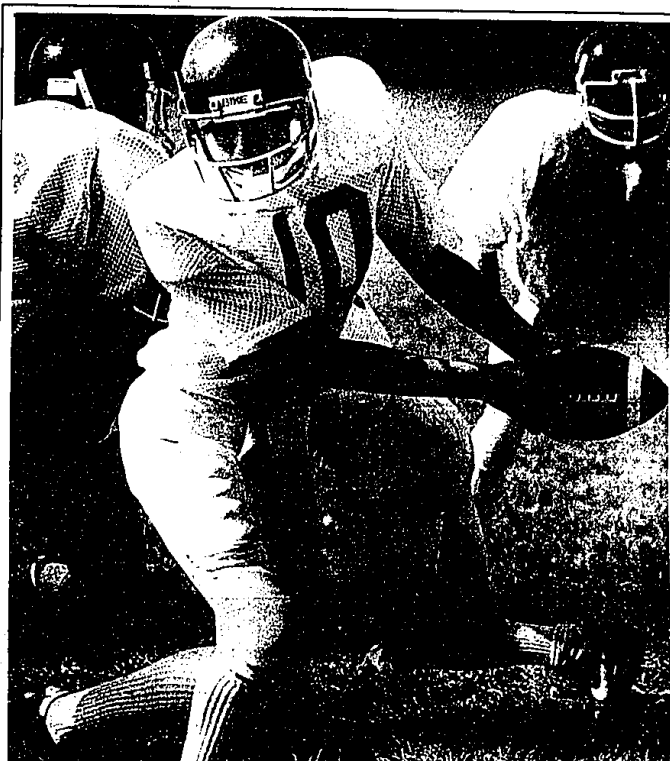
The builder, he said, sticks his neck out financially by buying property he's not sure he can use.

"There aren't too many developers who want to sell (a builder) property on an 'I' basis," Winton said.

"As a developer, I doubt I would go into a community where they have such an ordinance," he said, adding that he would be stuck with inventory because builders would be hampered from building affordable homes.

The three other major requirements under the new ordinance require that:

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

The inside info

Tim Berry, quarterback for the Farmington High Falcons, sweats through morning pre-season practice as area high school athletes gear up for the start of another football season. Beginning Monday, Farmington Observer sports editor Chris McCosky will fill you in on the changes

that have taken place over the summer including new coaches at Farmington and North Farmington High plus Harrison High's strategy for defending the Class A championship that they won last year.

Options are eyed for cable

Dreaming of producing a television show is one thing. Making the dream come true is easier to talk about than to do.

So a 10-member public access cable television committee — an arm of the tri-city Southeastern Oakland Cable Commission — has scheduled two meetings that will address religious and educational programming over the 15 public access channels available through the MetroVision cable firm.

"We're doing it in phases so we can deal with the bulk (of residents and interest groups wanting to produce television shows)," said Lark Samouelian, who represents Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi as executive director of the SWOCC.

THE FIRST EDUCATIONAL cable access advisory committee will meet at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 13, at the Oakland Community College (OCC) New Theatre. The first religious cable access advisory committee will meet at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14, at the Faith Community United Presbyterian Church on 10 Mile in Novi.

At both meetings, the two advisory committees will be formed, with appointments later to be confirmed by the larger citizen public access group. A minimum of three members is required for an advisory committee to be legitimate, Samouelian said.

The committees will decide how they will be organized, what types of programming and equipment could be used, Samouelian said.

Speaking of handling programming ideas, she said the advisory committees "are not there to discriminate or make judgments."

INSTEAD, THE ADVISORY committees, starting with the religious and educational ones, will recommend for specific programming, equipment needs and money to the citizen public access committee. That committee then is responsible for coordinating the use of the public access channels.

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Educators struggle in wake of vanishing state aid

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Like a faithful baseball fan, Oakland University President Joseph Champagne is waiting 'til next year.

That's when Gov. James J. Blanchard submits his budget for fiscal 1985 to the Michigan Legislature.

"We've had two executive-order cuts," said Champagne, referring to fiscal 1983. He wants to see if the recession-caused cuts are restored.

With the university presidents leading a supportive committee, Blanchard won an increase in the state personal income tax this spring, and now the universities want more state support.

"The governor told us, 'I'll give you some of what you want — not all you want. I will not give you a cut,'" Champagne said. "When they're restored — therein is the true test."

THE THIRD-YEAR president sees the state still lagging in its support of OU, with its nearly 12,000 students and 400-plus faculty members, despite the 38-percent increase in the income tax. He discussed OU's quality and quantity in a wide-ranging interview in his office.

"We're spending about \$200 less per student than five years ago," Cham-

pagne said, making an adjustment for inflation. His calculations go like this: In 1977-78 OU budgeted \$2,621 per student. Currently, it budgets \$3,878, but those are inflated dollars. In constant dollars, the budget is \$2,461 per student — a decline of \$200 or 8.8 percent.

State aid to OU has gone from \$1,734 to \$2,130 in the same five years. Adjusted for inflation, state aid has dropped \$1,352 or 22 percent.

What has suffered? Libraries, maintenance and equipment, Champagne replied.

IF THE BUDGET is down 8.8 percent and state aid is down 22 percent, what prevented an unbalanced budget?

Student tuition has been the answer. "Tuition has gone up 80 percent in four years, 100 percent in five years," he said.

"As a percentage of our operating budget, tuition rose from 27 or 28 percent of the total in 1977-78 to 40 percent for 1983-84 (the current fiscal year).

Like other universities, OU is looking to industry as a source of both students and operating support, training employees with companies picking up the tab.

He sees universities as having three

main functions: research, teaching and community service. "Service — that's my orientation," said Champagne, 45, an industrial psychologist who headed Houston's community college system before the OU board picked him from a field of 280 candidates.

"WE'RE DEVELOPING a new role in society. We are educational entrepreneurs, looking for markets that were out there but which we didn't serve before," he said.

Champagne visualizes a high technology park around OU. "We have a lot of land around here. Our purpose is to create an economic environment around us that is so healthy I can look to the future with confidence."

Last week the board of trustees authorized Champagne to prepare for a major fund raising campaign through the Oakland University Foundation. No goal has been set yet.

"As the university enters its second

25 years, it must generate additional private resources if it is to maintain the margin of excellence it is seeking," he said.

SOME PROGRAMS have been cut, others expanded, since Champagne came on board early in 1981.

Cut or due to be recommended for cuts are a master's degree program in psychology, a specialist in secondary education and a major in performing arts (minors have been retained). Performing Arts has lost its status as a separate school and has been placed under the College of Arts and Sciences.

Engineering, computer sciences, business administration and the health sciences have been expanded.

"We've had to cap off enrollment in engineering, because the demand exceeded our financial ability to develop new laboratories and hire additional faculty," said Champagne. "And we have begun to raise our standards of admission."

WITH SUCH emphasis on technical skills, Champagne is seeking to make good on another role which universities have played since the days of Socrates — ethics. He sees it as a particular need since the Watergate scandal in the White House demonstrated the need for ethical thinking as well as mere technical competence.

OU this year is introducing a new 36-hour requirement for all graduates — a general educational core emphasizing science, math, ethics and eventually some computer literacy.

"I was aiming for 40 hours," Champagne smiled.

Nevertheless, he feels he has made good on his inaugural pledge in which he talked about a "fundamental base" of knowledge with its core in "the liberal arts, sciences and humanities."

"Many believe that no undergraduate degree should be awarded a student who has not had formal exposure to these classical areas of enduring impact on the young mind," he said, adding:

"A sense of human dignity and worth must be an essential ingredient of the undergraduate curriculum if our emerging leadership is to avoid the Watergates of the future, both in government and in business."

oral quarrel

Although many people do not like discussing death, especially their own, morticians believe it is important to overcome their fears by understanding what is involved when a person dies.

Funeral directors, however, say that learning about the burial process, including embalming, body preparation, selecting a casket and funeral services may make it easier for the survivors to

accept a relative's death. Today's Oral Quarrel question is: HOW IS THE SUBJECT OF DEATH HANDLED IN YOUR FAMILY? HAVE YOU LEFT INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR BURIAL?

To respond to this question, call the Farmington Observer at 477-6498. You will have until 1 p.m. Friday to answer. To learn your neighbors' opinions, read Monday's Farmington Observer.

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CREATIVE LIVING
REAL ESTATE SECTION

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO AREA REAL ESTATE IN TODAY'S EDITION OF THE OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS

