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Twenty-five cents

It's policy: Farmington public schools are 'wholly neutral' in dealing with religious beliefs

By Tom Bear

staff writer

Is everybody happy? It seemed that way last Tuesday after the Farmington Board of Education announced its new policy on "schools and religion" before about 200 spectators and a TV news camera in the Farmington High School auditorium.

To be sure, one citizen said he thought the policy sounded like it came from Soviet Russia, but there were few serious complaints from the audience.

By contrast, parents and students had turned out in force for a Nov. 8

'I'm sure the kids will respond to clear direction and expectations.'

—Lewis Schulman
superintendent of schools

school board meeting. The meeting had quickly turned into a sometimes-bitter debate over the role religious groups should play in the lives of public school students.

Board members hoped that the policy — proposed but not yet adopted — would be the last word on Campus Life, the Christian social group which has created a controversy by trying to deliver its message in and around North Farmington High School for the past couple of years.

The policy says, in part, "... that school districts must be wholly neutral in dealing with religious beliefs. Therefore, while schools may teach about religion, schools must not support or introduce those procedures that either enhance, promote or inhibit religion."

The four-paragraph policy was accompanied by a set of six "procedures" to help implement it.

FOR EXAMPLE, procedure No. 3 says, "Farmington schools shall not sponsor, nor support, any club or organization whose goals and activities are religious or anti-religious in nature."

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About 200 spectators showed up at last Tuesday's Farmington Board of Education meeting in Farmington High School's auditorium to hear the board's new policy on "religion and schools."

RANDY BORST/staff photographer



Grove Sandrock, a Farmington Hills resident, speaks in favor of the board's policy during last Tuesday's meeting.

City's builders worry over development laws

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

Since the birth three years ago of the Farmington Hills Economic Development Corporation (EDC), more than \$47 million in tax-exempt bonds have been issued to aid commercial and industrial development in the city.

But if Washington legislators have their way, the city's ability to finance economic growth with EDC bonds will be curtailed.

"There is a lot of work going on in Washington," said Robert McConnell, the Hills EDC chairman. "... the EDC must not continue beyond next year."

Despite his pleasure with the EDC's accomplishments, McConnell's concern stems from Washington's worries over the federal government's growing deficit. Some lawmakers want to recoup what they feel the government is losing in income tax dollars on municipal bonds. Tax-free municipals are attractive because they represent a relatively safe investment, with a modest return and no tax on interest earned.

Designed under state law to stimulate economic growth, municipal development corporations issue bonds to finance or refinance the cost of commercial or industrial projects.

Developers can finance buildings and equipment at rates lower than those offered by commercial lenders.

On a project financed with a \$10 million bonding issue (an EDC's maximum for an individual project), the borrower

would pay only 7.5 percent interest, for example, compared to a current 11 percent rate, McConnell said.

EDC changes under discussion in Washington may place bonding power at the state level, where it would be tied to the per capita income of a particular area.

In other words, McConnell said, if the state was allowed only a certain amount of tax-exempt bonding, larger urban areas such as Detroit or Flint would receive the priority over suburbs like Farmington Hills.

If Washington indeed changes the EDC process, Farmington Hills may have only about \$4 million in bond issues next year compared to this year's \$15 million. Because the EDC currently is committed to some of the 20 projects now under consideration, "we may have committed everything we can in bond issues," McConnell said.

If changes come to pass, what Washington in effect would be doing, McConnell said, is making financing through tax-exempt bonds unattractive. But he believes "it is a case of taking it out of the left hand to put it into the right hand" because the amount of taxes the government misses from the interest on tax-exempt bonds is "such a small drop in the ocean."

"I am very much afraid of the future if this thing goes down," McConnell said. "The way it is now is a very free, competitive approach."

Under the proposed changes, however, the state's chances of attracting business could be hurt because some

business officials may find the large urban areas — where the tax-exempt bonds may primarily be available — unattractive or simply not conducive to their type of business.

Besides hurting the state's overall economy, the proposed changes, McConnell said, obviously would in turn hurt Farmington Hills' commercial/industrial tax base and job market.

In its three year history, the EDC has aided, through its projects, in creating \$1,342,832 in tax revenues annually to the city's coffers, McConnell said. The

commercial/industrial tax base helps balance the tax dollars spent on providing the residential segment with city services, he noted.

The EDC, he added, is shooting to push the commercial/industrial tax base to at least 30 percent of the Hills total state equalized valuation (SEV) in the next year. This year, the commercial tax base represented 28.9 percent of the SEV.

Equally important, however, are the 1,000-1,500 permanent jobs created from the 12 projects which have received EDC financing. In addition,

during the construction of those projects, 600-1,000 construction jobs were created, McConnell said. "We have a need to create and build jobs," he said, adding that "it is a shame in a way" that there is a possibility the city's bonding ability may soon be an element of the past.

Any changes made in Washington in the next few weeks, of course would also affect the future of Farmington's new EDC, formed in this past summer to finance a long-awaited and much-debated shopping center on the southeast

corner of Nine Mile and Farmington roads.

Weatherford-Walker developers are still working out leases for space in the proposed center, which would boast a 41,000-square foot Farmer Jack supermarket, said City Manager Robert Deadman.

"The (tax-exempt) bonds won't be issued until the project is completed," Deadman said, indicating construction should begin sometime in the spring.

Good Samaritan gets traffic ticket

By Gary M. Cates
William Casper
staff writers

All's well that ends well. At least, that's what two local good Samaritans hope.

Bob Anderson of Plymouth and Lane Wise of Livonia want to avoid paying for a speeding ticket they received while trying to help a woman in distress last week. So far, the incident hasn't settled well with either man.

The two witnessed an assault at Five Mile Road and Telegraph in Redford Township Monday night.

"We were leaving a church basketball game at Murphy High School," said the Rev. Anderson, youth minister

at First Church of the Nazarene in Farmington Hills.

"We heard a car come to a screeching halt on Five Mile. At the time I really didn't pay that much attention to it. I looked at the car, but we continued talking."

Anderson proceeded to get into the church's minibus, while Wise got into Anderson's car.

"We pulled up to the light at Five Mile and Telegraph. I was in the front. I was next to the car we heard coming to the screeching halt," Anderson said. "I looked down into the car and a guy was attacking the girl that was driving. She was blowing the horn, trying to get anybody's attention."

AT THIS POINT, Anderson said, he

got out of the bus and went back to get Wise from the car for help. Before the two got back to the woman's car, the man had taken off with his her purse and she had driven off.

"This definitely was not a boyfriend/girlfriend problem. He was beating her and took off with her purse," he said.

Instead of trying to catch the man on foot, Anderson and Wise decided to find a phone to call the Redford police.

"We headed down Telegraph and stopped at an Arby's," he said.

A manager at the restaurant called the police for the men because there wasn't a public phone there.

"The manager told us the police said to get right down to the scene in case they needed some witnesses."

The two left the restaurant in Anderson's car and looped around on Telegraph to head back to Five Mile.

As they were pulling around, an officer went flying by us without his overhead lights on. We figured he was heading to the scene.

"We jumped in behind the police car because there wasn't any traffic on the road at this time."

AS THEY drove toward Five Mile, Anderson said, they passed an unmarked traffic enforcement car in the median.

"When we passed that guy I thought, 'Oh boy, they're really taking this seriously, they're sending two cars,'" he said.

The unmarked car pulled in behind the men and turned on the flashers.

"When I saw the flashers behind us I couldn't believe it. Lane (who was driv-

ing) said let's go ahead to the scene since we're almost there. Instead, we pulled into a parking lot and I jumped out of the car."

"I ran back to the police car and told the officer that we were the ones who had called about the assault. He told me we weren't the ones that called."

"He said, 'You didn't call. So and so at a certain address called.' I told him to check with the manager at Arby's, but he just kept writing the ticket," Anderson said.

"He told me that we weren't an emergency vehicle, we were driving too fast, and that they didn't need our help. The officer said he was going to give us a break and only write the ticket for \$5 miles per hour over."

"I don't know if the guy was in a bad mood or what, but he wouldn't give an inch."

SINCE THEN, Anderson has contacted radio station WJR's "Call to Action" in hopes of having the ticket voided.

"Everybody's always saying cops need help and to get involved. And, when you do, you end up getting a speeding ticket," he said.

Redford traffic officer, Cpl. John Brodie, said police do want people to get involved and don't want this incident to scare off any potential witnesses to any future crimes.

Brodie said he is investigating the matter, and should be able to confirm the story told by the two men, he will ask the District Court to dismiss the traffic charge.

oral quarrel

Why would you be a space observer?

Private citizens may be passengers on space shuttles "as soon as 1985," according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which will begin soliciting applications early next year. A NASA spokesman said preference will be given to artists, writers, journalists and others who can convey the excitement of what they see in space.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: **WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE AN OBSERVER ON A SPACE SHUTTLE?**

To answer this question, call 477-5498. You have until 1 p.m. Friday to respond. Please speak clearly. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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EARLY DEADLINES

Due to the holiday, we will be closed Mon., Dec. 26. To place your classified ad for the Thursday, Dec. 29 issue, call Tuesday, Dec. 27 between 8 and 5:30.

Have a happy and safe holiday!

Remember... One call does it all!

591-0900

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