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Rents rise; so does tenants' wrath

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Chris Jarvis and other silent tenants in Fairmont Park apartments are perturbed.

Rent is going up again for many tenants in the 377-unit complex. Fairmont Park is one of three apartment complexes in the Farmington area owned by the Beznos-Bertak Co. The firm also owns Muirwood Apartments and Terraces in Farmington Hills and Kensington Manor in Farmington.

"We just decided we have had enough," said Jarvis, who lives in a two-bedroom terrace apartment with her husband and 3-year-old son.

In March, Jarvis paid \$530 for the 1,200-square-foot apartment. July brought another increase to \$555 a month.

In late September, Jarvis received a letter from the landlord informing her rent would be increased in November to \$600.

Jarvis, for one, does not plan to take the rent increases without complaint.

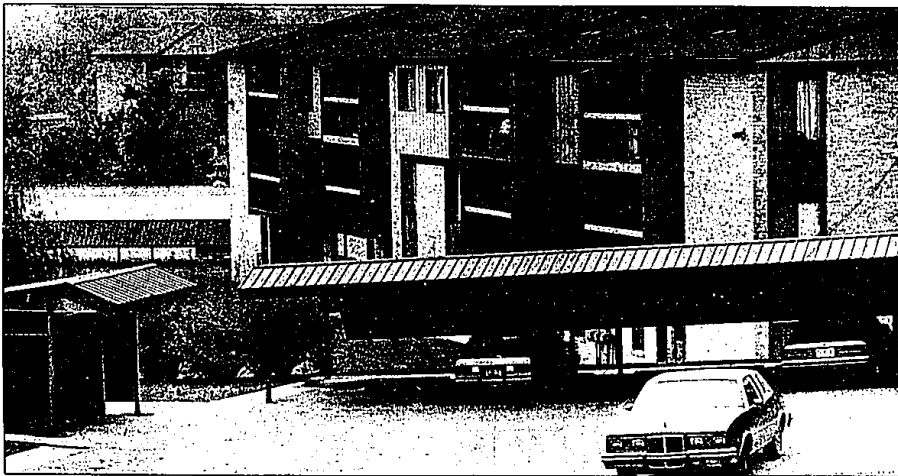
"We've got it all together. We just haven't formed a committee yet," Jarvis said, referring to tenants who are concerned and angry about the rent increases.

INSTEAD, JARVIS and her neighbors are waiting to see what tenants in Muirwood do about similar rent increases before taking action or making a formal complaint.

Some Muirwood residents met in the Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile earlier this week to discuss what options they have in fighting recurrent rent hikes. Members of the informal Muirwood committee refused to release the results of their meeting. The Muirwood complex has 1,173 units.

Despite murmurs of dissatisfaction with the rent increases, "we have had very few complaints in the last few days," said Louis Allen, Beznos official. "We've heard nothing at all on a formal basis."

Fighting the rent increases will be difficult for most residents because those who have more than a one-year residency currently do not have leases.



Rising rents in the Fairmont Park apartment complex (above) have angered some tenants.

HANDY BORSZT/staff photographer

After their first year of residency in the complexes, tenants' leases were not renewed. Rent has been charged on a month-to-month basis, Jarvis said.

When the Jarvis family, for example, moved into Fairmont in September 1981 they were given a one-year lease. Rent was \$455 a month.

"In the beginning it was affordable," Jarvis said.

When the one-year lease expired in September 1982, the Jarvises, like other tenants who wished to continue living in the complex, were without a lease.

After September 1982, Jarvis said, rent for her terrace apartment increased from \$455 to \$470 to \$500 up to \$530 this past March.

"It seems to me this was all planned

ahead of time," Jarvis said, about the complex owners giving only a one-year lease.

"They (landlords) said that because we had outstanding credit, we would no longer get a lease," she added.

EARLIER THIS month the landlords changed their tune, Jarvis said.

Jarvis received a letter indicating that residents would have the option of renewing their leases.

"Many of our residents have expressed the desire to have the option of a lease renewal as an alternative to a month-to-month residency," the Beznos-Bertak letter indicated.

If Jarvis wants a one-year lease at \$600 a month rent, she must notify the landlords by Oct. 19, according to the

letter.

"If there had been a lease in the beginning, no one would be paying \$600 now," Jarvis said.

Allen confirmed that tenants are now being offered the option of a one-year lease.

"Leases have been offered to all tenants," he said. "In recent months because of escalating rents, some tenants mentioned they would like a lease."

While Allen said the recurrent rent increases at the Beznos-Bertak apartments are "unusual by historical standards," tenants will be assured rent won't increase because of the one-year lease now being offered.

One of the reasons for the recurrent rent adjustments, Allen said, was to keep up with the market. Other com-

plexes in the area charge near or the same rent, he said.

A market study is always made before rents are increased, Allen added.

Although Jarvis believes \$600 a month rent is expensive, new residents in Fairmont will pay more than that for their apartments.

For a two-bedroom terrace apartment with two full bathrooms, rent for new tenants on a one-year lease runs \$650 on the first floor. On the second floor rent is \$840.

RENT ON a first-floor one-bedroom apartment in Fairmont is \$480 a month. On the second or third floor rent is \$470.

Rent on a two-bedroom terrace apartment in Muirwood runs \$600-

\$660. The terrace apartments have a utility room.

A conventional two-bedroom apartment at Muirwood costs \$540 a month or \$550, depending on the floor plan. A one-bedroom costs \$470 or \$510 a month, also depending on floor plan.

In March 1983, rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Muirwood was \$385, according to a former resident. After the one-year lease expired in April 1984, rent increased to \$405. Several months later, the resident moved out of Muirwood.

What concerns Jarvis is that many of the tenants in the apartment complex are retirees and single mothers who cannot afford to pay the rents now charged at the Beznos-Bertak apartments.

"I talked to two other single women who are looking for part-time jobs. They are going to have to get two jobs to stay here," Jarvis said.

But Jarvis said she is hard pressed for a solution.

Michigan does not have rent control laws to protect renters.

"There is no law that protects these people," said Jeff Bliz, who runs the Ann Arbor Tenants Union. "People are just getting raked over the coals with 10-40 percent increases."

LANDLORDS, THOUGH, are required to give one rental period notice (one month in the case of Fairmont and Muirwood) that rent will be increased, Bliz said.

The Michigan Consumer Protection Act also prohibits landlords from charging rents that are "way out of line," Bliz said. But it's difficult to determine what is "out of line" and "it's hard to make it stick," he added.

Although Michigan offers tenants little, if any, legal protection, Bliz claims "there is an awful lot people can do."

Residents can "collectively bargain" with landlords to set rent at what would be considered reasonable between the two parties, he said.

Another option is for residents to loudly and publicly oppose their rent and recurrent increases so landlords and owners of apartment complexes receive "bad publicity."

Sometimes, he said, bad publicity is effective enough to make a change.

Hills mayor to council: rescind liquor license

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills Mayor Charles Williams wants council's approval of a liquor license for Capraro's, a proposed new restaurant near Haggerty Road and Grand River, rescinded.

Listed on tonight's council agenda, Williams' request comes less than a week after council approved a Class C liquor license for Capraro's.

Although council was able to produce the needed five votes to approve the license for Capraro's last Tuesday, the proposed restaurant clearly was not the first choice to receive the city's last liquor license.

Council's first choices were Ernie's Deli and Restaurant of Muirwood Square and Etkin Equities. Other applicants included George Kasbah and

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plans to open a limited menu restaurant in Tally Hall and Food by Gregori on Grand River Avenue.

But what could have been a simple process of issuing the license turned into a stalemate as both Williams and Councilman Joe Alkatech abstained from discussing and voting on the issue.

Alkatech has a professional involvement with Etkin Equities. Food by Gregori's is a client of Williams' accounting firm.

When the seven-member council approves a license it is only a recommendation. The applicant does not automatically receive it. The final decision

is in the hands of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission.

WITHOUT MUCH discussion, Councilman Robert Anzlovar made a motion to approve the license for Ernie's Deli. Five affirmative votes are needed to approve a liquor license.

Before taking a vote though, Councilwoman Joan Dudley said she could not vote in favor of Ernie's.

Issuing a liquor license to Ernie's, she said, would not be in the best interest of the city because O'Sheehan's Tavern, also located in Muirwood Square, already has a liquor license.

Dudley said the city would be best served by reserving the license for Etkin Equities. Only Buddy's Pizza along the Northwestern corridor has a liquor license, she said.

After it was evident that only four votes would be cast in favor of Ernie's, Williams immediately asked other council members and city attorney Richard Poehlman if his vote would actually represent a conflict of interest.

Angry, Dudley snapped in response that Williams was changing his mind because she warned council she would

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Tigermania

Support for the Detroit Tiger baseball team, the American League champs, is strong around Eagle Elementary in the Farmington School District. Most Eagle youngsters, including Janet Blumentfeld (left) and Brad Shelton (right), came dressed in Tiger garb last Friday. Even teacher's aid Lauren Okopyn (center) got in the swing with hat, shirt and the players' names pinned to her clothes.

HANDY BORSZT/staff photographer

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...for those who expect more

CREATIVE LIVING REAL ESTATE GUIDE

IN THE OBSERVER'S ECCENTRIC'S THURSDAY EDITIONS

Two Detroiters were arraigned on a charge of larceny after an incident in a downtown Farmington Radio Shack store last week.

Antia Cavitt-Reynolds and Donald Holloway, both 26, face an Oct. 17 preliminary exam in Farmington's 47th District Court.

According to Farmington police, the

two had looked at electronic telephones in the Radio Shack in the downtown area and left the store last Tuesday when an employee noticed a phone was missing.

The employee followed them out of the store, police said, and escorted them to a yellow car in the parking lot and got in.

Meanwhile, the employee flagged down a patrol car in the parking lot and told officers about the situation.

They followed the car and pulled it over on eastbound Grand River. They searched the car, but didn't find the phone.

Back in the parking lot, an employee of another store found part of a phone and saved it for police. Farmington Police Det. Paul Potter found another part of a phone in the parking lot near the exit to Grand River.

Police said the suspects were arrested and, because they did not produce identification, were held overnight in Oakland County jail.

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