This dog makes the day for elderly — 1B

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Rent protestors vow to expand their drive

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The Beznos-Bertak Co. of Farmington Hills isn't the only one raising rent on tenants these days.

William Tyndale College — the latest meeting place for area rent protesters — just raised the rent.

Rent on the college auditorium for this week's tenants meeting was $75 — up from $50 in November.

And protesters will have to pay $100 to use the auditorium next time.

There will be no protesting of this increase, however. Tenants are taking their bad breaks, moving on and looking for a cheaper place to meet.

That's not the case with their months-long battle against the Beznos-Bertak Co. of Farmington Hills though.

The protesters — tenants of the Beznos Co. apartments and townhouses in Farmington, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Southfield — are beefing up their protest now that the idea of a rent strike has been laid to rest.

"We're not going to have a rent strike in the near future," said Rob Falls, a co-chairman of the multicomplex tenants association.

The reason is simple. If tenants put their rent into an escrow account, Beznos could charge late fees, take tenants to court and report the failure to pay rent to credit companies, Falls said.

"WE DON'T want to hurt the membership in any way," Falls said.

A rent strike is one of several ideas that has been under consideration to protest frequent rent increases, some as much as 32 percent in the last 28 months. The tenants' major complaint is the management firm's method of raising rents by not renewing leases, forcing tenants to pay rent on a month-to-month basis.

Although the possibility of a rent strike and an earlier notion of getting rent-control ordinances and laws have fallen through, the protesters are continuing their fight.

The next step, Falls said, is to enlarge and i. ./porate the tenants association to include all renters in Oakland County.

Originally, the association included protesting tenants in the Muirwood Apartments in Farmington Hills. In November, tenants from all the Beznos-owned complexes joined forces.

Now, Falls said, association officers are working to incorporate an Oakland County Tenants Association into a non-profit organization by the end of January or sometime in February.

What pushed the idea of incorporation was a letter from the Beznos Co. informing the tenants association that there could be legal action if tenants continued to pass out handbills on Beznos-owned property.

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Cairns bash draws tears and memories

By Steve Barnaby
editor

Tuesday evening was a night to remember for some 300 persons who gathered to honor the dean of Farmington Hills politics, Floyd Cairns.

Cairns, who retired in December after 29 years at the clerk's helm, first in the township then in the city of Farmington Hills, found himself choked with tears at evening's end when it was announced that the city hall would be named the Floyd Cairns Administration Building.

Naming the building had been a secret known only by council members and city administration organizers of the dinner at the Botsford Inn.

In his familiar modest, low-key delivery, Cairns thanked the overflow crowd which packed into the Inn's Carriage House.

"It certainly was nice of all of you folks to honor me like this. It's been a pleasure to work in Farmington Hills, a place that I've loved," he told his well-wishers.

In halting, tear-filled phrases, he thanked his staff, many of whom were in attendance and some of whom had served with Cairns during nearly his entire tenure.

"It's been real nice," he said.

Dinner speakers who roasted and toasted Cairns were a compendium of the area's leading citizens from the past and present.

Floyd Cairns

Heading the list was former Farmington Hills mayor Fred Lichtman, who also served on the charter commission and as a township trustee. Lichtman drove in from Marshall, Mich., with his wife Naomi to serve as the evening's master of ceremonies.

Lichtman set the tone for the evening by toasting Cairns for his many attributes and calling him "the most decent man I've ever known."

LONGTIME TOWNSHIP trustee, city councilman and personal friend Earl Opperthauser, who served in municipal government for 23 years with Cairns, called him a "grand old scout" and noted that he had "never known a man in public office who was more helpful than Floyd."

Farmington Hills' first mayor, Robert McConnell, made note of the contributions of Leola Cairns, Floyd's wife, to the city clerk's longtime service.

"Thanks to her Floyd got through a heart attack and open heart surgery," he said. Cairns had heart surgery twice during his tenure as clerk and each time came back within weeks to continue his duties.

Among many of the things she did to help keep up Cairns' health, Leola took up bike riding with him, noted McConnell.

Other persons honoring Cairns were former deputy clerk Gladys Thomas, the present Farmington Hills clerk Joan Reynolds and YMCA vice president Gary Unruh.

In the 1970s, Cairns was instrumental in raising close to $1 million for the Y building on Farmington Road and Twelve Mile.

Perennial council watcher and Democratic activist Aldo Vagnozzi noted that an evolution had taken place in Farmington Hills.

"Floyd didn't change. I did," he said.

On a more serious note, Vagnozzi called Cairns a "man of fairness, compassion and one who has a deep love of our community."

During the program Cairns was given a series of gifts, including a scrapbook of newspaper clips and photographs, a street sign with his name on it, bookends from the Alexander Hamilton Insurance firm and a videocassette recorder.

BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Checkmate!

This chessboard and pieces done by students at Oakland Community College were among the ice carvings in last weekend's Ice Spectacular festival in downtown Plymouth. The chess pieces stand about 3 to 4 feet tall on the ice board. Officials estimate about a quarter of a million people viewed the ice carvings. Overall winner in ice carving competition amongst the pros was Milos Cihelka of the Golden Mushroom. The 200-some ice sculptures on display throughout downtown Plymouth will be auctioned off. Bid forms are available at The Gathering (the pavilion on Penniman Avenue) and Kellogg Park.

Building plans sought

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

After more than a year of talking, Farmington Hills officials have taken the first step toward building a proposed 35,000-square-foot police building.

Construction of a new facility would alleviate the current 7,500-square-foot station's crowded conditions.

In a 6-0 vote Monday, the council agreed to ask the city's architects, Luckenbach & Ziegelman of Birmingham, to prepare proposals for the selection of a construction management firm for the proposed project. Councilman Charles Williams was absent.

The council also authorized the city's bond attorneys to prepare resolutions and contracts that would allow the city's building authority to issue bonds to pay for the construction.

These steps came a week after the council received a recommendation from a committee of local architects, engineers and builders to begin construction as soon as possible to avoid increased costs due to an expected construction boom in Michigan.

The committee of local professionals was formed last spring to play devil's advocate with design plans developed by the Birmingham architects.

Committee members a week ago said that if the project is delayed until May through July, the city could expect a 10-15 percent increase in construction costs.

TO AVOID this, the committee also suggested that the council consider using construction management in the development of the proposed police building.

If the council approved using construction management by Feb. 1, the architects said they believe bids could be taken sometime in March with construction beginning in April, said City Manager William Costick.

But Costick said research is still needed on the construction management approach.

Construction management involves the use of a professional construction management firm which coordinates and manages the building process, Costick said.

"The construction manager acts as a fiduciary for the owner, a fact which makes the project a cooperative team effort rather than a proceeding among adversaries," Costick said in a report to council.

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oral quarrel

Should King Boots live or be destroyed?

King Boots, a prize-winning sheepdog, is accused of mauling to death an elderly Birmingham woman last month. The dog's owner and daughter of the victim, Kathryn Schwarb, is fighting attempts by the city of Birmingham to have the animal destroyed as a "vicious dog."

Testifying in the dog's trial before 48th District Judge Edward Sosnick, a Michigan State University professor said that the 87-year-old victim died of a heart attack, not from dog bites as claimed by an Oakland County Medical Examiner.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

If you were Judge Sosnick what verdict would you hand down on King Boots' fate?

To answer the question, call 477-5498 before 1 p.m. Friday. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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Cable increase set next month

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

It's been a slow process, but MetroVision cable officials finally received the rate increases they've been waiting for.

In separate actions in the past couple of weeks, the city councils of Novi, Farmington and Farmington Hills, without much controversy, adopted ordinance amendments approving the cable firm's request for a rate increase.

As of Friday, Feb. 1, MetroVision subscribers will pay increased rates for Tier III (channels 2-113) level of service.

Subscribers currently pay $7.35 a month for Tier III service. On Feb. 1 the monthly rate will increase to $9.95. The installation charge would remain the same.

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