

Dilemma

Harger House's fate hangs in the balance

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Historical commission chairman Joan Fox was the first to be called before council. She made a plea for historical architecture in light of the future. "It is a house that will always stand as a living legacy," she said.

Fox showed slides of restored Greek Revival houses in southeastern Michigan to exhibit the beauty of preserved and maintained historical dwellings. Her intention was to show the council and community members what Farmington Hills might also have if the Harger House were saved. Fox pointed out the house's large broad-ax cut stones and triangular Greek-inspired



'New buildings are never as aesthetic as the ones they replace.'
— Jack Faxon, state senator

lintels, before she introduced state Senator Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills.

FAXON SAID that new buildings that are built where old ones once stood, are "never as aesthetic as that which was destroyed." Faxon said that the house's significance extends beyond its priceless architecture because Oscar Seally Harger, patriarch of the dairy-farming family, was Farmington Township supervisor in 1871. "And he was a Democrat," Faxon added. This comment gained hearty laughter from the audience and council members.

As the meeting progressed, the comic relief inserted into public comments was less prevalent.

"This house epitomizes the rural aspect of the Farmington Hills area," Katherine Briggs, Farmington Hills Historic Commission chair, said. "It is indicative of the life and customs of people in Farmington Township." Harger house is a "stunning example of our heritage for our youth."

Paul Blizman, resident of the Hunt

Club Estates, explained that of the subdivision's 108,239 acres which has been divided into 194 lots, "there's an extra acre no longer needed in zoning the existing open-space plan."

The house is in the center of this acre in the zoned open space. Contrary to other subdivision residents who made anti-preservation and anti-public-use remarks, Blizman believes a community use for the house would "enhance the community and the Hunt Club subdivision." Blizman suggested that the Jaycees might be good occupants.

"WE DON'T HAVE a home," Walter Reddig, outgoing president of the Farmington Artists' Club, said. Reddig was the first speaker to offer a specific plan for the house. "We must look at the children yet to be born and save (the house) as a symbol for our children to see," Reddig continued by making pleas for art, architecture and community. Artists who already have an expressed affinity with aesthetics would be most concerned with restoring and preserving the house, Reddig said. He passed out a tentative proposal for the Artists' Club adoption of the house to councilmembers.

"The residents feel the house is worth saving, and they should be compensated for their land loss," said John Willard, president of the Farmington Historical Society. He suggested that the Jaycees might be the best proprietors.

Jaycee representatives Mary Sanders and Tom Buck made a presentation highlighting Jaycee community service programs. Like the Artists' Club, the Jaycees are also looking for a home base where they could hold their six to seven meetings per week.

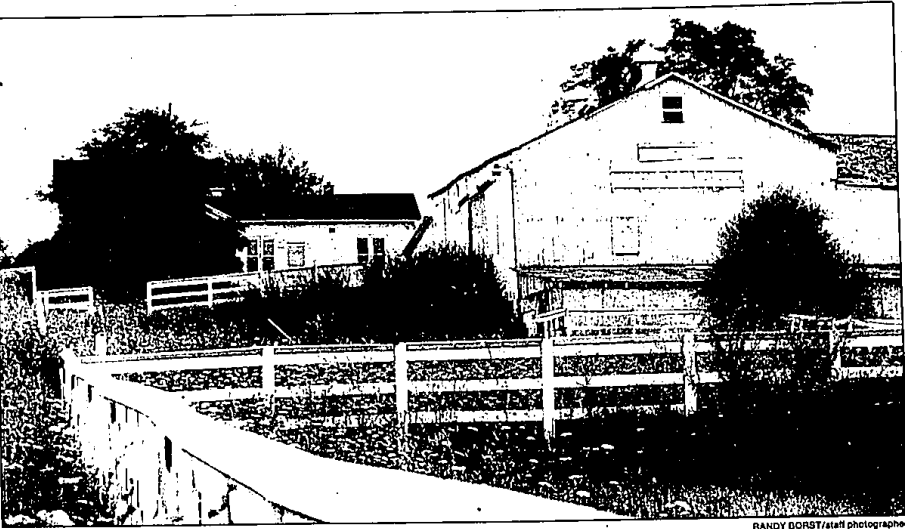
A community historical library collection was suggested by Joan Barber, a member of the Historical District Commission and an Eastern Michigan University historical preservation graduate.

A HISTORICAL RURAL classroom or a school television studio were the suggestions of Dave Litogot. He introduced himself as the only teacher in the Farmington school system who teaches Michigan history.

A 24-year resident of Halsted Road and a member of Historical Halsted Homes (HHH) said her organization would like the Harger House included among the group of several other occupied historic rural homes on Halsted Road.

The Farmington Artists club has great procurement potential, according to member and past-president Alice Nichols. "We have grant potential," she said. "To procure a grant you have to have a project." The club has previously been awarded Michigan Council for the Arts grants for such programs as senior painting held at Mercy High School. If the club were to obtain the house, chances of receiving a grant toward restoration would be substantial, according to Nichols.

The upbeat, salvational mood of the hearing changed in its second hour. "We twice voted to raze all the (old)



The Harger House was a familiar sight to Farmington Hills residents as part of a horse boarding stable. The future of the home is being debated.

buildings," Ray Boujoulain, spokesperson for the subdivision residents, said. "It's a nice old house," he continued, but "it is on the most desirable spot of open space and it is a deterrent to that open space."

"THE MOST desirable acre in the whole area," should be "put off limits

to any outside party," Boujoulain said, as the audience bood. Approximately 29 Hunt Club residents accompanied Boujoulain to the hearing.

"You all are looking at the Harger House with different eyes than Standard Federal," bank senior officer Dur-

wood Allen said. The bank inherited the subdivision acreage by default and is attempting to find a major buyer. It was only last July that Fox contacted Allen and explained the house's historical significance. Any subdivision decision must be voted on by residents and the successor to the builder, Allen said. The barn's silos were recently deemed contaminated by health officials and

they will be demolished by Standard Federal in the near future.

DEMOLITION BIDS have already been accepted for all the old buildings, according to Allen. A revised plan for the open-space is under way, whether the house will be included in this plan hasn't been determined, Allen said.



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