

Housing rehab program takes cut in funding

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The four-year-old housing rehabilitation program has expanded to give assistance to 128 households. By providing low-interest loans, deferred loans and grants, the program allows eligible homeowners to make home improvements such as new roofs, heating, plumbing, and electrical installations, furnaces, insulation, and aluminum siding.

IN ADDITION, a Home Security Improvement Program allows senior citizens to receive free deadbolt locks and eye viewers, and a Smoke Detector Program allows qualified residents to receive smoke detectors at no charge.

Speaking for the housing rehabilitation program, Marks said, "Number one, it's not a gift. This happens to be a rolling fund that is paid back, and goes back out to help other people."

Referring to the federal deficit reduction act, Marks added, "If Gramm-Rudman goes through, then at least we'll have some \$100,000 to \$150,000 rolling around to help these people maintain their dignity."

Councilman Donn Wolf disagreed

with Marks. He supported the administration's recommended allocation of the CDBG money. But he stressed that he would prefer that all the money go to capital improvements. Councilwoman Jody Soronen also supported maintaining at least \$100,000 for capital improvements. "I have felt all along that we get the biggest bang for the buck out of capital improvements. It benefits the largest amount of people for the longest amount of time."

But rehabilitation loan board member George Roberts — one of three speaking at the public hearing — attacked the use of CDBG funds for capital improvement projects.

"It's kind of bad to start using federal funds to pay for something (capital improvements) you (the city) should have paid for yourself years ago," Roberts said.

"The community at large was not intended to benefit. That was a function of revenue sharing. Even so, the community at large has benefited. Many have been senior citizens and single parent heads of households, many of

whom are mothers. I sincerely hope that the council will recognize that the housing rehabilitation program will have to be expanded regardless of federal cuts," Roberts said.

Administration includes the payment of salaries, supplies, and legal notices. With administration costs cut from \$50,000 to \$38,000 under the new plan, a report by the city manager recommended limiting staff funding to housing rehabilitation specialist Cheryl Carter only.

According to Director of Public Services Thomas P. Blasz, that would mean dropping an allotment for clerical time included in the current budget, and may involve the city picking up some of the costs.

That suggestion was supported by resident Aldo Vagozzi.

"What I'm suggesting is that while administrative expenses have been cut percentage-wise to meet the smaller amount, maybe the city could pick up some of that figure," Vagozzi said.

"What I'm suggesting is that we find to put more money into the rehabilitation program."

A PUBLIC hearing regarding fund-

ing of capital improvement projects was postponed until April 21 to allow city officials time to solicit opinions from neighborhood residents.

In 1986-87, Farmington Hills areas considered eligible to benefit from the federal dollars include ten census blocks in the southeast area of the city in sections 26, 33, 34, 35, and 36.

The city engineering department has compiled a list of six priority projects on which to spend the anticipated \$130,000.

If the first project does not proceed, the next one would assume priority.

The projects are as follows: Farmington Area paving and drainage; Section 33. Suggested expenditure: \$130,000.

By paving roads and implementing drainage improvements, spring flood conditions would be lessened. About 80 residents would be affected.

Regal Orchards Subdivision drainage improvements; Section 26 and 35. Suggested Expenditure: \$130,000.

The gravel roads are in poor condition, needing drainage improvements and outlets. Residents affected: 105.

Grayling Avenue storm sewer; Section 36. Suggested expenditure: \$39,000.

Roadway flooding and a roadside hazard due to deep ditches is caused by a drainage problem. Ditches would be enclosed. Residents affected: 20.

Radcliffe storm sewer; Section 35. Suggested expenditure: \$19,000.

This would affect only about 20 residents, but would have a positive impact on motorists in the area, according to the report.

Osms paving and drainage improvements. Suggested expenditure: \$118,000.

This would help improve the Osms street area south of Tillman, a narrow street with many drainage problems.

Meadowbrook Heights subdivision paving and drainage improvements. Suggested expenditure: \$57,000.

Drainage enclosures would help accomplish drainage and paving. Sixty residents would be affected.

Clarenceville joins insurance group

Clarenceville will join other school districts in establishing a self-insurance pool in an attempt to find relief from soaring property/casualty coverage costs.

The Clarenceville Board of Education authorized the move at its Feb. 13 meeting. The pool will be administered under the Michigan Association of School Boards/School Employers Group.

INITIAL COST to Clarenceville will be \$6,000, based on current enrollment, or \$2 per student. This money will be used to offset starting costs and provide an immediate loss fund.

The investment plus interest will be returned to the districts before dividends are distributed, if surplus funds become available. If the pool can't be set up, each district's investment would be returned by Dec. 31, 1988.

Livonia Public Schools decided to participate in the pool two months ago. The city of Livonia joined a similar plan in November.

Insurance costs have become staggering for school districts. Clarenceville's liability insurance was cancelled last year, but the district was able to sign up quickly with another company.

"Our deductible went from \$1,000 to \$10,000," said Edward Salts, assistant superintendent of school business affairs. "And everyone is in the same boat."

Livonia's coverage costs — approximately \$500,000 — for this fiscal year have almost tripled from last year's costs — some \$160,000 for liability and property insurance.

THE POOLED insurance plan calls for claims up to an established amount to be paid out of the fund, after a district's deductible is satisfied.

Specific loss reinsurance, purchased by the fund, will pay claims above the limit. The fund will have \$5 million aggregate loss reinsurance coverage. Claims handling and engineering services will be provided to member districts.

A six-member board of directors, appointed by the SEG board of directors, will control the pool. Each member will serve a term of six years. Four of them must be active school administrators, one may be a retired school administrator and one the MASA executive director.

As of last month, more than 120 districts had deposited some \$600,000 to the pool, according to Norman Weinheimer, president of the MASA School Employer Trust/School Employers Group, in a letter to the board president and district superintendent.

The group has commitments from six companies for various kinds of specific underlying coverage.

The group needs a total \$1 million to get the necessary aggregate reinsurance coverage.

Advertising plan slated for downtown

By Joanne Malliszowski staff writer

A first step is being taken to reposition downtown Farmington in the marketplace with a one-year advertising and marketing program in which downtown businesses share in costs and benefits.

"We are attempting to get the downtown businesses on a one-year business promotion," market analyst Nick Nicholas said. "It is a short-term solution to changing the image of downtown."

The use of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a long-range solution that will help redevelop downtown and bring in new development, Nicholas said. The intent of a DDA is to promote economic growth, increase property values, bolster the commercial tax base and strengthen ties between merchants in the central business district.

In the meantime though, the advertising and marketing program is expected to immediately begin improving the downtown's image and position in the suburban marketplace, Nicholas said.

An advertising and marketing campaign was a suggestion listed in the Farmington Futures Program, an analysis of downtown Farmington's problems and solutions for improvement. The analysis was completed by Nicholas and architect Christopher Wazany, who were retained by the city of Farmington to advise the Downtown Farmington Development Committee.

'It is a short-term solution to changing the image of downtown.'

— Nick Nicholas market analyst

FOUR MEMBERS of that original committee are the moving forces behind the advertising and marketing campaign.

"We're part of the original committee of downtown people working toward accomplishing a new image and a DDA," said Jody Soronen, executive director of the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and committee member.

Although the advertising campaign is a separate effort from the recently established DDA, "it will go hand-in-hand to improve the downtown," Soronen said.

Other committee members include Jerry Wingenter, Kathy Versaracate and Bob Heinrich. The Chamber of Commerce is helping coordinate the program, Nicholas said.

"This is the first effort to pull together the people in the downtown — roughly the DDA district. It is a cooperative advertising effort to promote downtown," Soronen said.

The advertising and marketing campaign will involve the use of a magazine-type publication, distributed through the local newspaper. The publication will be offered four-to-six times a year. The advertising effort could potentially reach 60,000-70,000 consumers in the suburban Detroit area, Nicholas said.

The idea is to "pull them (downtown businesses) together in a cooperative program," Nicholas said. About 40 businesses — using about eight pages in the publication — will be needed to keep costs down, he added.

THE PUBLICATION has two functions. The first is to show consumers all the unique businesses in downtown Farmington.

"Collectively we can show all the specialty shops," he added.

The second function is that the publication will encourage each business to merchandise their unique products.

"This way the (individual) businesses

can do good business from it," Nicholas said.

The publication is also designed to combine advertising and promotion by targeting it for certain times and events of the year, Soronen said.

The four publication dates are April 10 (Spring Shoppers Bazaar), May (Birthday Celebration), September (Fall Festival) and November (Gift Giving).

The committee that is planning the advertising and marketing campaign will meet again at 2 p.m. March 5, in Farmington City Hall, 23606 Liberty.

"We haven't done anything further yet for making a permanent downtown group," Soronen said. "We should have in connection with this (advertising campaign) some kind of more organized group of people for promotion."

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