

Senior housing is in works for old school

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

A plan to convert a vacant school in the south end of Farmington Hills into senior citizen housing is moving closer toward becoming a reality.

In a 6-1 vote Monday, Farmington Hills City Council introduced an amendment to rezone the Clarenceville School District's old Westbrook Elementary on Osburn from single-family residential (RA-3) to elderly housing district (RCE).

The eight-acre parcel is east of Osburn, between Salvador and Junction. But rezoning includes only the school and a small portion of land surrounding the building.

"I am not going to vote for this because I don't think it is a good spot for senior housing," said Mayor Pro Tem Ben Marks in opposing the amendment's introduction.

The amendment's introduction came a month after the council postponed its decision to give developer Jeff White time to develop a plan that would alleviate neighbors' fears that additional buildings would be built on the site.

AT THE time, the council was also concerned that senior housing would create potential traffic problems on the unpaved roads in the neighborhood. The proposed project's lack of access to a major or secondary thoroughfare — a requirement of the RCE zone — also concerned council and neighbors.

But after hearing some changes in White's proposed plan, neighbors expressed their support of senior housing in their neighborhood. "We would like to see something done with the building. Elderly housing seems good to us," said a Sunnydale resident.

Although the amendment is expected to be enacted, White most likely will have to request a variance from the Farmington Hills Board of Zoning Appeals because the planned senior housing facility lacks major or secondary road access.

In answer to earlier objections about his proposed project, White told the council he would sell for single-family use or donate to the city to be south of the old school and a lot north of the building.

"This would make it physically impossible for us to build anything else on the land," White said.

TWO PROPERTY owners whose lands abut the school property also told the council they are interested in buying a portion of the lots east of the school, again eliminating any expansion of the building or construction of new buildings.

The council, however, reminded the two property owners that the rezoning request did not include the

full dimensions of the lots on which the school sits. Consequently, the developer could not build on the remaining portions of the land without again requesting rezoning.

The council directed city staff to study the possibility of accepting the lots White offered for donation and converting them into a neighborhood park. A report is expected prior to the council's expected enactment of the zoning amendment.

Answering complaints about traf-

fic problems and the lack of access to a direct thoroughfare, White said, "I feel the existing roads have been overstated, over exaggerated."

Farmington Hills planning consultant Claude Coates said that the planned senior housing facility would generate less traffic than the building did as an elementary school.

Approximately 3.3 trips a day would be generated by White's 25 planned units, for a total of 75 trips a day. As a school, approximately 250

trips a day were generated. And if the property on which the school sits was sold for single-family housing, 130 trips a day would be generated, Coates said.

ALTHOUGH WHITE most likely would have to go before the city's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for a variance because of the lack of frontage or entrance on a major or secondary thoroughfare, Councilwoman Jan Dolan offered a suggestion.

Salvador — a portion of which is a road only on paper — could be opened up as an east-west route that would connect with Robinson, west of Osburn. By connecting to Robinson, traffic would have a more direct route to Eight Mile.

Although nearby residents could object, the city could legally acquire Salvador because the extension is already platted, City Manager William Costick said.

Author coming to bookstore

Author William K. Kienzle will be on hand 12:30 p.m. Saturday at the Little Professor Book Center in Farmington to autograph his new book, "Deathbed."

"Deathbed" takes place in an inner-city Catholic hospital. It's about a madcap murder, bungling and bungling — the eighth mystery starring Father Bob Koester, Kienzle's priest detective, who stalks the killers who have singled out a heroic hospital administrator for death.

A bumbling volunteer, a randy security guard and a klutzy nurse's aide keep the good Father guessing as the plot twists through a maze of missing drugs, mutilated medical instruments and malicious doctors.

Ordained into the priesthood in 1954, Kienzle spent 20 years as a parish priest. After leaving the priesthood, Kienzle became editor of MPLS magazine in Minneapolis and later served as director of the Center for Contemporary Studies at the University of Dallas.

"As more than a million readers have learned to their delight, Kienzle is a font of funny stories. He has created one of the most likable and authentic of all recent sleuths — the shy, shy Father Bob Koester — whose exploits into crime and insights into parish life have continued in seven gossipy and cozy mysteries," wrote the Chicago Tribune.

This will be the Southfield resident's second visit to the Little Pro-

fessor in Farmington, 37115 Grand River. Last year, he autographed his then-new book, "Sudden Death."

One of Kienzle's books, "The Rosary Murder," is currently being filmed in Detroit.

"Deathbed," by William K. Kienzle, published April 14 by Andrews, McMeel & Parker, Fairway, Kan., 264 pages, \$14.95.

Commission seats filled

Farmington Hills City Council made three appointments April 14. Charlotte Olson was appointed to a three-year term expiring Feb. 1, 1989, on the historical commission. Beatrice Smith was appointed to complete the unexpired term of her late husband, Frank, on the beautification commission. The term expires Feb. 1, 1987.

Elaine Siewruck was appointed to complete the unexpired term of Susan Combs as the Michigan National Bank of Farmington representative on the housing rehabilitation loan board. The term expires Feb. 1, 1988.

The appointments were presented by Mayor Joe Alkateeb.

Farmington Observer

(USPS 187-840)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham, MI 48016. Second-class postage paid at Birmingham, MI 48012. Address all mail subscriptions, changes of address, Form 3509 to P.O. Box 2428, Livonia, MI 48151. Telephone 691-0500.

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One year \$24.00
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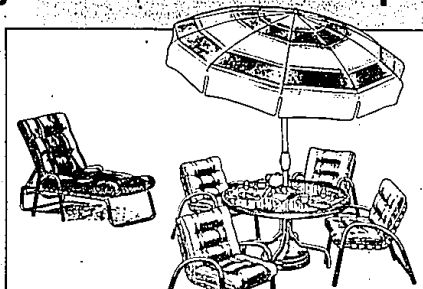
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