

Hills rezoning denial draws criticism

By Casey Hane
staff writer

A Southfield real estate broker involved with a proposed hotel development at the Orchard Lake/1-696

interchange has responded to a March rezoning denial by the Farmington Hills City Council.

He's not happy. William Fearon, director of the Real Estate One Commercial Inc.

land division in Southfield, was involved with the recent proposal and with two previous commercial ventures proposed for the wooded, residentially zoned, nine-acre parcel. Fearon represented Michael

Horowitz of the Selective Group, developer for a proposed hotel and retail shopping center on 6.5 acres across from Oakland Community College, south of Rockville. THE LATEST attempt to rezone

the parcel was defeated in a 4-2-1 split vote by the Hills council March 17. Several residents from the area and city planning officials voiced disapproval of the project.

A major concern of city planning officials was the potential traffic congestion near the I-696 interchange. Planning commissioners denied Horowitz' request at a March 6 hearing, where he told the commission the traffic and noise at the corner was not conducive to single-family housing.

Horowitz was not present at the council hearing because, he said, he was never officially advised of the public hearing. Requests by Horowitz to move the hearing date, to reconsider his rezoning request and allow him to bring his case to the council were all denied.

Councilwomen Joan Dudley and Jan Dolan cast the dissenting votes against the latest rezoning denial, saying they felt the developer should have been present during the council hearing.

THE CITY'S master zoning plan was recently amended to allow cluster housing on the parcel, which Hills Mayor Joe Alkateeb calls a "reasonable alternative" for use of the land. Fearon does not believe this is the case.

The broker is unhappy, arguing the future widening of Orchard Lake Road will make the major artery an important one for commercial development, although the city's master plan calls for residential growth south of I-696.

"Remember, that site's subdivisions were built on were beautiful pieces of land once, but were

changed for the betterment of somebody," Fearon explained. "I wouldn't think of bringing an offensive project into a community. We're not building lot line to lot line."

MANY COMMERCIAL developments were built along main arteries in Farmington Hills by court order through consent judgments, according to Fearon, although Alkateeb said the city has few pending legal cases involving zoning.

Fearon could not say whether the hotel development proposal would end up in court; Alkateeb said to his knowledge, no suit has been filed.

Areas "south of the expressway will be residential," Alkateeb said, citing the city's master plan. "We'll stick to it. Everybody has been dealt with fairly."

"If anybody comes up with a reasonable request and alternative, we've always been open," Alkateeb added. A commercial proposal on the corner would "change the entire character of the city. They want to twist the rules to their own advantage."

THE BROKER said there is a time in the near future when the use of the parcel will be determined. "It's not going to sit forever as it is on the tax rolls," he said. "If it has to come to litigation by proponent, owner or purchaser, then that's going to be the bottom line."

In rezoning court cases, "the court looks for a master plan in place," according to Alkateeb. The cases lost by Farmington Hills were those confiscatory in nature — when reasonable alternatives for use of the land were not offered.

Election nears

Clarenceville schools aim for millage renewal

By Mary Klemic
staff writer

Clarenceville School Superintendent Michael Shibley is taking no chances concerning the 8 mills of operating funds on the June 9 ballot.

Besides electing two trustees to the Clarenceville Board of Education, voters in the district will decide whether 8 mills of operating funds will be renewed.

Clarenceville includes parts of Farmington Hills, Livonia and Red-

ford Township.

"We have to have it (the renewal)," Shibley said. "I don't even think that we could operate if it were cut."

The school chief has launched a campaign on behalf of the renewal. He has spoken on the subject before various groups, plans to take the message to cable television and will mail out a "millage fact sheet" to voters.

"It's not a millage increase," Shibley said. "We are keeping the tax rate the same."

EIGHT MILLS represent \$8 for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation. One mill generates about \$140,000, according to Shibley, who says he'd be "very surprised" if voters didn't approve the measure. Personnel and programs would have to be cut if the 8 mills were lost, he said.

"I am not really sure we could run a basic program (without the 8 mills)," Shibley said.

Clarenceville, with a \$7.3 million budget, now levies 29 voter-approved mills for general operating expenses for the schools. Eight of these mills expire this year. The other 21 were renewed in a millage election last year.

In addition to these 29 mills, Wayne County allocates 8.9 mills to Clarenceville for operations. Voters last year approved another 0.5 mills for capital improvements and maintenance of the district's facilities.

SHIBLEY REFERRED to a survey of Clarenceville residents and

employees that was taken in 1984. After the results were tabulated, the Clarenceville Board of Education came up with short-term (yearly) and long-term (one- to five-year) goals. The short-term goals will be met this year, the superintendent said. And the district is "right on the time schedule" as far as accomplishing long-time goals, he added.

These projects include a program for the gifted and talented, student competency exams, a homework policy and a developmental kindergarten.

"The district is really moving in the direction the community is asking it to go," Shibley said.

"These things cost money," he added. "Without the 8 mill renewal, all these programs would have to be eliminated."

Voting locations are Clarenceville Junior High School (Precinct 1) and Clarenceville High School (Precinct 2). The polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Hills schedules skating party

"Circus on Wheels," a rollerskating party for elementary age youth and their parents, is planned 4-6 p.m. Wednesday, May 21, by the City of Farmington Hills' Department of Special Services, Recreation Division.

The rollerskating party will take place at the Bonaventure Skating Center, 24505 Halsted, Farmington Hills.

Participants are invited to dress up as their favorite circus character or to have their faces painted like a clown at Bonaventure. Pre-registration is recommended by May 19 through the recreation office. Fee

for the program is \$2 in advance or \$3 at the door. Skate rental is available at Bonaventure for \$1. Games and prizes are all included in the program.

For further information, contact the Recreation Office, 474-6115, Ext. 290.

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