

Ballots no longer sent automatically

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The Farmington Hills City Clerk's longstanding practice of automatically mailing absentee voter applications to residents 60 years of age and older has been discontinued.

The city clerk's office will continue to mail absentee voter applications to residents who request them in writing or by telephone. City Clerk JoAnn Reynolds said.

A request for absentee voter applications must be made prior to each election, including the special Tuesday, June 24 election for parks and recreation development, and the Tuesday, Sept. 23 special election requesting approval of a bond issue for road improvements.

Those who vote by absentee ballot in the state, federal and county Tuesday, Aug. 5 primary will be asked at that time if they want an absentee ballot for the Tuesday, Nov. 4 election, Reynolds added.

City officials plan to inform senior citizens of the change in procedure through the bimonthly city newsletter as well as by individual letter. Information about the new absentee ballot application procedure will be included in the city's next newsletter, prior to the June 24 special election request for 0.5-mill levy for parks and recreation development and facilities.

THE LETTERS will be mailed to those senior citizens who responded in a poll last year that they still

wanted automatic applications, Reynolds said.

Last year's poll was conducted to update the list of senior citizens wanting applications. "We also received hundreds of cards back saying 'don't send it (application) to me,'" Reynolds said.

The Farmington Hills City Council agreed to discontinue the practice of mailing automatic applications and inform residents of the change only through the newsletter.

Concerned that many senior citizens would not read the newsletter or miss the notice in it, Reynolds asked council to approve the mailing of additional letters to those senior citizens still on the list for automatic applications.

Council approved the additional

letter in a 5-2 vote. Mayor Joe Alkateeb and Councilman Ben Marks were opposed.

Marks told council he preferred to continue with the former practice of automatically mailing the applications to senior citizens. "I would like to return to that procedure," he said, adding he could not see the harm in mailing the applications with the city newsletter.

BUT SINCE the city established the automatic mailing of absentee ballot applications to senior citizens in the late 1970s, more residents have availed themselves of the procedure and costs have increased considerably, Reynolds said.

When the procedure was begun, only about 1,500 automatically received applications. Prior to last year's city council election, 8,000-9,000 applications were mailed. In addition, three-to-five city clerk office workers are needed to process applications and absentee ballots,

Reynolds said.

Because the June 24 and Sept. 23 special elections are the first such elections in the city's history, Reynolds asked council for guidance regarding the ballot application procedure.

"To date, we have not had a special election and because of the costs associated with this absentee voter application policy, feel the need for specific direction from council," Reynolds said, in a report to council.

Based on recent past state, county, federal and city elections, the approximate cost of mailing about 8,000 applications and ballots totaled \$14,000. The total includes printing of applications and ballots, postage for applications and ballots, envelopes and extra office help to process applications.

BECAUSE FARMINGTON Hills has never had special elections in its history before, "I want you to be

aware there will be an automatic drop in the number of people voting," Reynolds told council last week, following discussion in the change of procedure.

Last year's city council election drew 6,312 total voters, of which 3,126 voted by absentee ballot, Reynolds said.

While city officials have discontinued the automatic mailing of applications, residents — other than those 60 years of age and older — may still request absentee ballots by phone or mail, if they qualify.

Absentee ballots are available to any voter in Farmington Hills who will be absent from the community during poll hours; is physically unable to attend the polls on election day because of religious tenets; is an election officer in a precinct other than their own; is 60 years of age and older; or is unable to attend because of imprisonment.

Service to mentally ill lauded

Dorothy McQueen of Farmington Hills was named 1986 Public Citizen of the Year by the Michigan Chapter-National Association of Social Workers.

McQueen, an active volunteer, was chosen for her dedication to serving the mentally ill.

In 1978, when a family member became mentally ill, she founded the Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Michigan. The alliance is a self-help group for families of people suffering from mental illness.

She has served as president of the Parents and Relatives Association of

Clinton Valley Center (Michigan Department of Public Health), and is chairwoman of the center's Citizens Advisory Council.

McQueen is a graduate of the Detroit Conservatory of Music and taught piano and theory from 1958 to 1985.

The honor was given to McQueen at a banquet May 16 at the MacKenzie Hotel, Mack-



Dorothy McQueen

nae Island, in conjunction with the chapter's 10th annual conference.

Another Farmington Hills woman, Elizabeth Field, of Milestones Unlimited, was guest speaker at the conference, which offered 34 other workshops, ranging from topics like childhood incest, to medical social work in the year 2000, and the death penalty.

Budget date set

Farmington City Council received feedback at the May 19 public hearing for the proposed \$3.7 million 1986-87 city budget.

The city is proposing to maintain the same millage rate, with adjustments for the increased state equalized property values.

There are "no new services anticipated, or any services cut," City Manager Robert Deadman told the audience.

Comments on the "well-presented" and "conservative" budget were heard, as well as individual questions about the city's museum and historical commission budgets.

Budget adoption is slated for Monday, June 2, during the next regular city council meeting.

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