

# Plan calls for moving historic house

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preserve and relocate the house marks a significant end to what has become one of the city's and historic-district commission's most controversial battles to save a historic landmark.

During the more than yearlong controversy, Hunt Club residents have become progressively adamant in wanting the house removed or torn down. Residents had made it clear to city officials in September that they do not want to give up any portion of their 30-acre commons area for the Harger House.

Residents also told city officials they oppose the sale of the house to a private owner for restoration on site. The hill the Harger House sits on is considered by residents to be a prime portion of the commons area.

Residents also told city officials in September they wanted a solution to the controversy and gave the city a

90-day deadline to make a decision. McCluskey's proposal was first made public at a city council special study session Nov. 3. At that time, the McCluskeys remained unidentified because negotiations were in progress.

BUT COSTICK was told at the meeting that other residents interested in the Harger House — particularly a young couple who wanted it as a residence — should be offered the same opportunity to buy the 12 Mile city-owned property.

"It was offered to others. But no lot in the Hills was found to be suitable (to relocate the Harger House). This (12 Mile) site was not deemed residential," Fox said.

The McCluskeys, insurance agents with offices in the Pettibone House, plan to restore the Greek Revival house for office use.

"I think the house we are going to will be nice, situated next to the Pet-

tibone House," Donald McCluskey said. "If we do this right, the building will be here for the state's 300th anniversary."

The McCluskeys' interest in the old dairy farmhouse wasn't immediate. Though Lynn McCluskey has always dreamed of living in an old house, their real estate search recently has been for an office.

Though the couple was aware of the historic house on Halsted, Donald McCluskey said at first he didn't really consider restoring it for offices. "We knew of the house. We live nearby. We always knew the house was there. But we didn't think we could move a stone house."

IT WAS City Assessor Dean Babb though who convinced McCluskey to take another look at the 2,000-square-foot Harger House. "I went out and checked it out again," McCluskey said.

With the help of masons and carpenters, the McCluskeys plan to disassemble the house during the winter, with a goal of having it totally removed from the Hunt Club commons area by May 1. The total project is expected to take 18 months to two years, McCluskey said.

As masons disassemble the Harger's House's 20-inch walls, each individual stone will be numbered so that it can be exactly reassembled at the new 12 Mile site. Interior woodwork — including windows and window seats, fashioned into the stone walls, as well as axe-been beams of the foundation — will be removed and refinished in the relocated house.

The house is "super-insulated" with interior 2 by 4s, packed with insulation, air space and then stone, McCluskey said. Though the McCluskeys would not divulge their costs to disassemble, move and restore the house, they said it will cost more than a new office.

A replica of the original frame will be built on the 12 Mile site, while the existing frame will be destroyed and the basement filled in, McCluskey said.

UNDER AGREEMENT with the Historic District Commission, the fascia boards — the "wide white returns" that mark the truncated triangles significant of Greek Revival construction — are also to be moved



BOD SKLAR/staff photographer

Donald McCluskey (left), Jean Fox and Lynn McCluskey look at a 19th-century photo of

the Harger family at Thursday's press conference.

and restored if necessary, Fox said.

"The home is of unusual architecture, being constructed of cut-stone granite, gosses and limestone blocks that were fashioned by axe from stone on the land of the Harger farm," Fox said.

The stone construction at such an early date in Michigan's history makes the house significant.

"The home was built by someone with extensive architectural knowledge. There are quoins, such as one

seen in English and Scottish cathedrals, lintels over and under the windows, and string-courses (rows of smaller matched cut stones) such as are found in the Italian villas of the Medicis in Florence, Italy," Fox said.

The house was built in 1837 for John Dahl, Harger — one of the area's earliest settlers. Harger's son, Oscar, was Farmington Township supervisor in 1871. The 200-acre dairy farm remained in the family

until 1952, when it became rental property.

Finally, in the 1970s, the Hunt Club subdivision was begun. With the Harger House nearby, developers built the subdivision and planned commons area on a now discontinued horse farm theme.

Though the McCluskeys have not yet completed all plans, it has been decided that disassembly and restoration will definitely involve Noble's Eight Mile Supply and Lahser Woodworking, both of Farmington Hills.

## Volunteer praised

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when one of her daughters was involved in a serious accident.

While standing vigil for her daughter, who was in an intensive care unit, McEvilly found herself growing close with other families who were sharing similar experiences. "In the ICU, we became one family."

AS TIME passed and her daughter recuperated, McEvilly decided she wanted to continue to help and share with others. "It's amazing what you can do for other people."

Today, she attends meetings of the Closed Head Injury Alliance as a means of helping others cope as well as helping them find support services.

As a Botsford guild member, McEvilly spends her hours visiting patients, working in the hospital gift shop and, once a month, gives communion to Catholic patients. She has also served as the guild's vice president and corresponding secretary and has led quite a few fund-raising projects.

As a volunteer for St. Alexander's, McEvilly works with food

programs, visits the sick and lonely in their homes, drives people to doctors' appointments and social service agencies and packs food for the poor.

But that's still not all that McEvilly does with her days. She is also a volunteer companion for Hospice Support Services offering care to terminally ill patients, as well as giving support to their families. McEvilly also offers her help in what is called the 72-hour vigil — before a terminally ill patient's death — during which she stays with the patient while family members get some sleep.

"People are so anxious when someone is dying. Just someone to be there with you is a help. There is so much you can offer each other," McEvilly said.

DESPITE HER work in situations that others might find depressing and morbid, McEvilly says she isn't shaken in her belief that life is good.

"I have really had a good life, a happy life," she said. "I have five children, I have a good family, a good husband. We have so many blessings."

## School trustees adjust budget

This year's increased enrollments, annual insurance premium increases and personnel restructuring prompted the Farmington school board to make several major budget adjustments Nov. 4.

The adjustments, made on a monthly basis, are normally routine and minimal, according to Deputy Superintendent Michael Flanagan. Several large-ticket items were questioned by school board members before the adjustment was made.

An increase of \$123,000 in insurance costs is due to an unexpected enrollment increase that prompted the hiring of new staff and an increase in annual insurance premiums, Flanagan told the board.

Additional increases of about \$69,000 in custodial and maintenance costs were aimed at "bringing school buildings up to minimum standards," he said.

Nearly one quarter of the district's buildings were not staffed

properly for the size of the buildings. This analysis of maintenance staffing "hasn't been done in over a decade," Flanagan said.

As a result of additional teaching staff and adjustments to the district's health insurance, fringe benefit costs went up \$32,776.

"We've been looking at this (budget adjustments) for about a year now, month-by-month," Flanagan said. "There will be a lot of house-keeping adjustments in order to have the books in order by June."



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