

Connecting subs split Hills city council

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Green Hill Commons residents will get a second chance to oppose the Farmington Hills City Council their subdivision should stand alone without connection to an adjacent neighborhood.

In a 4-3 vote Monday, council agreed to consider an amendment to the recently approved Green Valley Estates subdivision plat. The plat and the continuing controversy includes the opening of Wildwood, a street that would connect Green Valley Estates and Green Hill Commons.

Councilwomen Jan Dolan, Joan Dudley and Jody Soronen opposed amendment consideration because it does not conform to the city's long-standing practice of connecting subdivisions.

"I would expect at that point (when the amendment is considered) the administration will bring to us a report on any progress the developer has made on our previous action," Dudley told City Manager William Costick.

When council approved the Green Valley Estates plat in mid-October, the developer was directed to begin opening Wildwood as a connector between the subdivisions, on Nine Mile, east of Halsted.

Despite Monday's favorable council vote, Green Hill residents' second chance to stop the planned opening

of Wildwood wasn't given without a hard fight from Dolan.

THE VETERAN councilwoman demanded more discussion of the city's subdivision connection policy before consideration of a plat amendment.

In light of the council's mid-October approval of the Green Valley Estates plat, any amendment would represent a major change in long-standing city policy, Dolan said.

"I am against bringing it up again. This is not a Wildwood problem. This is a policy discussion," Dolan said.

The city has traditionally required that all subdivisions, at least the newer ones in the last eight-to-10 years, should be connected to provide access for emergency vehicles. Connecting subdivisions has also been used to prevent neighborhoods from becoming separate and exclusive areas within the city.

Dolan told council that the city's policy should be formally changed so council "should stick to its convictions." She asked for a scheduled discussion — with city planners in attendance — of the city's policy without bringing the controversy between Green Hill Commons and Green Valley Estates into it.

"Now you are suggesting we change the policy... I think that is a major change," Dolan said. "I am not talking about changing any plat. I am talking about a discussion of policy. I feel very strongly about it."

Santa luncheons slated

Santa will make a stop at the Farmington Community Center Friday-Sunday, Dec. 5-7.

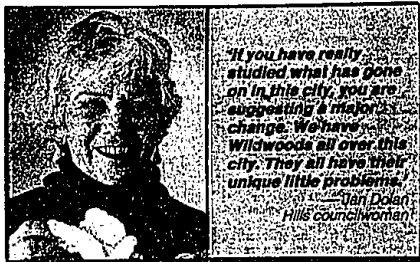
The center is at 24705 Farmington, north of 10 Mile, Farmington Hills.

This festive center tradition includes lunch, entertainment and a "for kids only" boutique offering inexpensive, handmade items for holiday giving.

Lunch, including all-beef hot dogs, potato chips, jelly, carrot sticks, an apple, beverage and brownies, will be served at 11 a.m. or 1 p.m. each day. Cost is \$3.50 per person.

Individual or family pictures will be available for \$2. Additional pictures taken will cost \$1 each.

Advance reservations only. Tickets are on sale at the center. Call 477-8404.



"If you have really studied what has gone on in this city, you are suggesting a major change. We have Wildwoods all over this city. They all have their unique little problems."
— Jan Dolan
Hills councilwoman

"If you have really studied what has gone on in this city, you are suggesting a major change. We have Wildwoods all over this city. They all have their unique little problems," Dolan continued, promising she would oppose consideration of amendments to the plat.

COUNCILMAN BEN MARKS agreed with the necessity to reassess the city's policy. But he later joined councilmen Dean Wolf and Terry Sever and Mayor Joe Alkateeb in defeating Dolan's request and the proposed plat amendment — closing Wildwood — on the council agenda. Councilwomen Dudley and Soronen maintained their earlier positions on the subdivision issue and supported Dolan.

"I don't think you can make a policy that is binding on council members," Alkateeb told Dolan. "I don't know if there is a policy. I know we have an understanding (about connecting subdivisions)."

Monday's debate over city policy stems from residents' anger over council's mid-October approval of the Green Valley Estates plat and connecting street.

Green Hill Commons residents oppose the subdivision connection for several reasons. Green Hill residents

don't want to provide Green Valley neighbors additional access to the 74-acre Green Hill commons area.

"The new subdivision (Green Valley Estates) is not compatible with Green Hill," said resident Chuck Faughnan in a telephone interview recently. He added that the Green Hill commons area should not be shared because Green Valley residents do not pay association fees.

Residents also complained that opening Wildwood would only serve to create traffic problems, including speeding. With three available entrances to Green Hill, adequate access is provided for emergency vehicles, residents argued.

Green Hill residents also presented council with a petition in mid-October showing that a majority of subdivision residents opposed the street opening.

"Nobody wanted to listen to this," Faughnan said.

WHEN COUNCIL council members approved the Green Valley plat in mid-October, they told residents that although they sympathized with their concerns, they planned to follow city policy.

Despite council's approval, however, residents continued with their efforts to prevent the opening of Wildwood.

In the month since council's plat approval, Green Hill residents have been lobbying other residents in their subdivision and along nearby Metroview, as well as one or two of the council members.

When Green Valley residents felt they had again gathered support for their cause — including signatures on a second petition — they asked council on Nov. 10 for reconsideration.

City attorney Paul Bibeau told council and residents that the only way to make a change in the plat was by amendment, not reconsideration.

After council watcher Aldo Vagnozzi reminded council that Roberts Rules of Order prohibits amendment or rescinding of a previous action if it was voted on or ordered. That means, Vagnozzi said, if the subdivision developer has since begun work on opening Wildwood, the plat cannot be amended.

Vagnozzi also reminded council that according to the rules of order, an amendment cannot be made or action rescinded when the action is made in the form of a contract. Plat approval, he continued, is a contract between the city and the developer.

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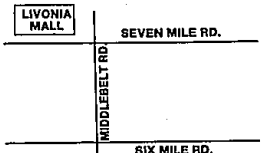
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10:00 a.m.
Saturday, Nov. 22

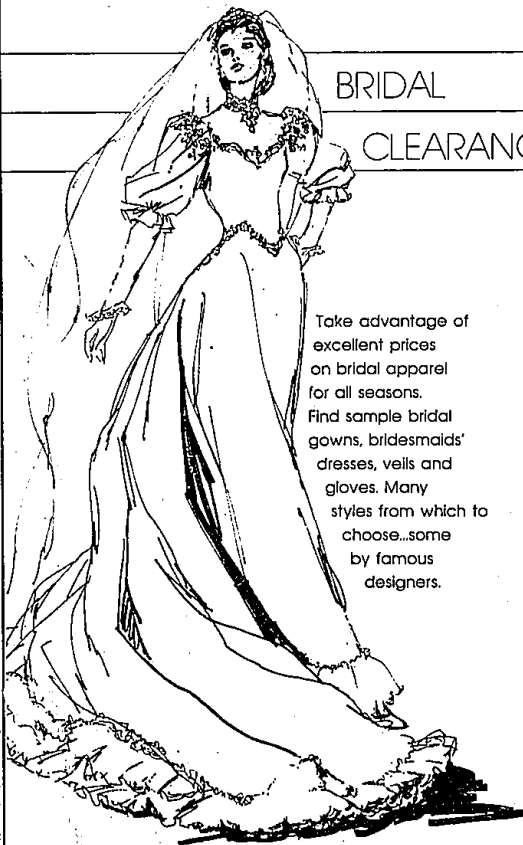
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