

City allows ground sign for Dimitri's

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Area residents will be able to dine at Dimitri's soon.

They will be guided to the new restaurant in downtown Farmington by a ground sign — despite a split city council vote Jan. 5 and discussion of how the city's sign ordinance should be interpreted.

Ground and roof signs in the central business district are prohibited by the city's sign ordinance, unless a variance is granted by the city council.

A variance was granted for Dimitri's by a 3-1 vote, with Mayor William Hartsock, Councilwoman Shirley Richardson and Councilman Arnold Campbell voting in favor of the measure. Councilman Ralph Vetter was absent.

Lone dissenting councilman Richard Tupper voiced his displeasure with council variances over the years allowing numerous ground signs in the city's business district.

"Our ordinance is very specific," Tupper said. "I believe that ground signs are basically a main problem in the community. It is our duty as a city council to abide by the city ordinance. . . or change it."

TUPPER SAID he felt the council was changing the ordinance "under the guise of an appeal."

Dimitri's owner Angela Anastasio — doing business as Farmington Restaurants Inc. — plans to open his restaurant "as soon as possible . . . within a month and a half," where the former Hardees was, at 35220 Grand River, he said.

The building has stood vacant at its prime downtown location since late April when the parent company for the fast-food Hardees chain decided to close the outlet for economic reasons.

It has been boarded up since the Hardees closing. Anastasio now has a long-term lease of "10-15 years" on the building, he said.

Re-using the face of the ground sign previously advertising Hardees "is very important to us," Anastasio said.

He said he did not believe a building sign could be seen by passing Grand River traffic.

Richardson said she wanted to keep the ordinance the same, not allowing ground signs in the central

business district, but giving the council an option to grant a variance. "It gives us more control," she said. "We should judge each case on its own merit."

"They are going to need some kind of sign. I would rather see a ground sign than a boarded-up building," she added.

Many of Tupper's ground sign complaints centered around those

with maintenance problems causing them to look bad. City Manager Robert Deadman called the maintenance problem "a different issue."

"If it (the sign) is not lit up, the businessman should be made aware of it," Campbell added.

He called on the city's Downtown Development Authority and local merchants groups to be aware and help with the problem.

About the present ground signs located in the central business district, Deadman added: "Some were compromised to other types of signs allowed under the ordinance that would have been worse. That's why the ordinance gives us the appeal process."

"Sometimes . . . it makes better sense for the community."

Hartsock said he supported the actions of past councils and the reasoning behind allowing other variances.

"I don't view the ordinance as an absolute," he said. "If we deny this, it will be contrary to everything we've done since the ordinance was enacted."

The council granted a variance to Hardees when the company took over the now-defunct Burger Chef chain several years ago, according to Deadman. "The sign is a great deal lower and smaller than the previous sign used by Burger Chef," he said.

The sign contractor, Atlas Signs,

had already done work on the Dimitri's sign before discovering he needed a variance from council, according to information presented Monday.

"If we turn this down, that's going to be a cost penalty to you," Campbell said. "I feel bad for you as a businessman."

Deadman said it is common for sign companies to become involved in sign work before checking Farmington's local ordinances.

Review panel members are needed

Farmington Hills officials are seeking applicants to serve on two property tax assessment boards of review in March.

Two seats on the three-member board of review are open. Board members Joan Lennis and Harlem Morris are resigning. Though the appointments are for three years, one of the appointees would complete the remaining two years of Lennis' term, Assessor Dean Babb said. A third member, Gordon Meyers, will continue.

"Preferably, we are looking for people with knowledge of property values, or some related field — real estate, construction, law," Babb said, adding such professional background is not an appointment requirement.

Applicants must be able to meet days and evenings for the second, third and fourth weeks in March. In addition, the board meets once in March prior to the scheduled review board meeting as well as in July and again in December, Babb said.

Board of review members will review the assessment roll prepared by assessor Babb and hear property owners' assessment appeals.

"The Board of review also hears appeals made on the basis of an individual's ability to pay property taxes," Babb said.

APPLICANTS ARE also being sought to serve on a new three-member commercial/industrial property tax assessment review board. Board appointees would serve for one year.

The assessor's staff is expecting an increase in commercial and industrial property tax appeals because of recent notification that these assessments have been increased an average 30 percent.

Theoretically, the problem you get with commercial is that they are normally a little more com-

plex than with residential appeals," Babb said.

Increased assessments are the result of a major two-year reappraisal — conducted by the Oakland County Evaluation Division staff — of all commercial and industrial property in Farmington Hills. The reappraisal brings assessments up to the 50 percent market value that the state requires property to be assessed at for taxing purposes.

Though 30 percent is the average

increase, many commercial and industrial owners' assessments were more than doubled, some increasing 60-80 percent, Babb said.

Approximately 1,350 commercial and industrial property owners were notified of assessment changes in mid-December. An assessors' review board has been meeting since late December for property owners to review their assessments with Oakland County assessors. But as of late last week, only 12 percent of the com-

mercial and industrial property owners met with assessors, Babb said.

THE ASSESSORS' board of review was established to give property owners a chance to review and understand why assessments were changed. Property owners will still have an opportunity to appeal assessments at the annually scheduled board of review in March.

Residents interested in serving on

either the regularly scheduled board of review or the special commercial/industrial board of review in March are asked to apply in writing to City Manager William Costick, 31555 11 Mile, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48018, by Monday, Jan. 26.

Members of both boards of review will receive \$15 an hour compensation. Applicants must be resident property owners of the city and have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Court supports schools in lawsuit

A federal appeals court in Cincinnati rejected a lawsuit Dec. 15 filed by a deaf, mentally handicapped man who alleged he was denied an adequate and meaningful education.

Farmington Public Schools, Oakland Intermediate Schools and the Pontiac school system were defendants in the suit, originally filed in federal court in December 1981.

A three-judge panel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Constitution guarantees Dennis Gallagher, 32, of Pontiac the right to an "appropriate" education, but not necessarily one most suitable for his handicap.

The appeals court unanimously upheld a ruling by U.S. District Judge George Woods in favor of the school systems.

The appeals court also rejected other claims by Gallagher, including an allegation he made under terms of the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

The court ruled that law did not apply to Gallagher when he was a student.

Gallagher attended school in the districts from 1973 to 1979 and was not excluded from special education

classes, according to court records. He attended school at the Farmington Training Center from Sept. 3, 1976, to Aug. 9, 1977, according to local school records.

Fred Parker, supervisor at Farmington Training Center, said he recalled Gallagher as a student who regularly attended school. "We just couldn't help him the way his parents wanted him helped," he said.

The court suit argued Gallagher was in effect excluded because he had no communication skills and was unaware of what went on in the classroom.

Because he attended Farmington schools for such a short time, the district had little information about the suit.

"We just got swept up in the situation," said Farmington Superintendent Graham Lewis, who headed the district's special education department at the time the suit was filed.

He said Gallagher received most of his schooling through the Pontiac system.

Such lawsuits are sometimes prompted by parents, Lewis added. "Often, (the problem) is the goals and objectives of the parents . . .

who see their child, whose abilities are limited, unable to read after 25 years of schooling."

Districts in Michigan are mandated to teach special education students until the age of 25, Lewis said.

Gallagher's attorney, Jon Garrett, said immediately following the decision he had not decided whether to appeal. He did not return phone calls from the Observer to comment further about the suit.

Associated Press contributed to this report.

Chamber slates 5 workshops

Five business-related workshops will be sponsored by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

The workshops will run 8:15-9:30 a.m. Wednesdays and include a continental breakfast.

Jan. 21 — Market Planning Strategy for Small Business, with Mary DiPaolo of Marketrends.

Feb. 25 — Advertising, with Al Haberstrof of Simons Advertising.

March 25 — Sales Motivation and Training, with Doug Kaminski of Anderson Paint.

April 22 — Using Professional Services, with Donald Spencer of Management Alternatives.

May 20 — Public Relations, with Dan Criscenti of Bunnell & Co.

Workshops will be held in the Farmington Community Center, 24705 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills. The cost is \$10 per workshop to attend one or two, \$7 per workshop to attend three or four, and \$5 per workshop to attend all five.

To register, call the chamber office: 474-3410.

on the agenda

Agenda details for government meetings scheduled for this week follow. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington Hills City Council
Council Chambers
31555 11 Mile
7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 12

Under unfilled business, the council will consider enacting ordinances to relocate the historic Harger House. They will also discuss rezoning property north of Eight Mile and West of Gill from RA-3 to RC-2.

The status of sanitary sewer for Kirby Avenue and a report from the Oakland County Health Department will also be presented under old business.

Under new business, the council will consider:

- A compliance response to the Michigan Department of Social Services for proposed Adult Foster Care Family Home at 22624 Colgate.
- A request from the Michigan Sequelcentennial Oakland County Advisory Council to participate in a celebration of the Statehood Michigan on Jan. 26.
- Notification of the Michigan Municipal League Region IV meet-

ing on Jan. 22.

- Acceptance of the resignation of Margaret Downs from the city's Board of Canvassers.
- Increasing marriage ceremony fees to \$35.
- Updating and republishing the city code.
- Authorizing the Federal Clean Water Act.
- The purchase of diesel and gasoline fuel, computer hardware for various city departments, computer upgrading for the 47th District Court, fuel pumps for the Department of Public Works and engine diagnostic gas analyzer for the DPW garage.

- Extension of final preliminary plan for Strathmore subdivision, approval of final preliminary plat for Farmington Hills subdivisions #2 and #3 and extension of open space completion for Hunt Club subdivision.
- Transfer of two parcels to the Caddell Drainage District, and
- Approval of holding a joint city council and parks and recreation commission meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 28.

Planning Commission Chairman Philip Arnold is also slated to address the council tonight.

Farmington Board of Education

Lewis Schulman
Administrative Center
32500 Shawwassee, Farmington
7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13

Trustees are expected to adopt goals and objectives for the district Tuesday night. Also on the agenda is the appointment of a middle school principal, purchase of sound equipment for Farmington High School and computerized engine analysis for Farmington, Harrison and North Farmington high schools.

Also to be discussed is a report from the board policy committee regarding changes in two sections of the district policy manual.

Farmington Hills Planning Commission
Council Chambers
Farmington Hills City Hall
7:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15

The planning commission will review the following:

- Zoning text amendment for buffer yard landscape requirements;
- Request for an eight-lot subdivision for Copperwood North, part of Copper Creek PHD, Proponent, Thomas G. Blue of Giffels-Wheeler Engineers Inc. Owner, Copperwood Creek Limited Partnership.
- Request: Revised 42-lot subdivision, Country Ridge. South side of 14 Mile, east of Haggerty Road. Proponent, Alfred J. Macksey Company.
- Request: Revised conceptual plan for proposed PRD. South side of Nine Mile, west of Gill Road. Proponent, Leonard G. Siegal of Siegal/Tuomala Assoc. Owner, Italian American Builders, cluster development and Fenton Investments multiple development.

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Department ID
Pueblo, Colorado 81009

Arthritis Today
Joseph J. Weiss, M.D. Rheumatology
18829 Farmington Road
Livonia, Michigan 48152
Phone: 478-7860

RECENT THINKING ON TREATMENT FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Why are drugs, formerly used to treat cancer, now being used in the therapy of rheumatoid arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis occurs as a result of a failure in immune surveillance. The immune control system for the body can be likened to a comprehensive alarm plan for a home. The home system may have several parts: one to stop burglars from entering; another to warn occupants if fire breaks out; and yet another to signal when noxious gases arise. Each part has its specialized component, but much of the plan uses circuits in common.

The human immune surveillance system also works to stop unwanted outsiders: infectious agents, inflammatory arthritis, and cancer. Each part of the immune system is specialized to protect against one class of invaders, but each uses many reactions in common. Experience has shown that certain drugs help the body's immune system fight cancer. The hope is that these drugs can be modified to help another part of the immune system fight rheumatoid arthritis.

To date this expectation has not been fulfilled. But results of using anti-cancer drugs to fight arthritis are sufficiently encouraging to continue this approach in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.