

Hills increases mayoral marriage fee

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Weddings — at least those performed by the Farmington Hills mayor — will cost more in 1987. In a 5-1 vote Monday, the Farmington Hills City Council increased the longstanding \$10 fee to \$35, as requested by Mayor Ben Marks. Mayor Pro Tempore Jody Soronen and Councilwoman Joan Dudley opposed the increase.

But Marks' accompanying proposal to use the \$25 increase to help finance the Farmington Community Center was put on hold.

City attorney Paul Bibeau is expected to determine whether city officials can legally redirect marriage ceremony revenues from the city's general budget to a special purpose.

"Currently, the city charges \$10 for all marriage ceremonies, and I understand from talking with (former) Mayor (Joe) Alkateb that while this covers the city's administrative costs for setting up the appointments for the actual ceremony, most times the burden of performing the ceremonies became quite an imposition in having to meet other people's schedules," Marks said in a proposal to council.

WHILE MAYOR, Alkateb performed 10 wedding ceremonies in 1986. In June, Alkateb stopped performing weddings because they were too time consuming and difficult to schedule, according to city records.

At \$10 a wedding, the city's general budget received a total \$100 for weddings performed by the mayor in 1986.

Marks told council that after years of charging only \$10, it's time the fee was increased, especially in light of the time and effort involved in arranging and performing the ceremony.

"My thinking on this is that \$10, which seems adequate to cover our administrative costs, would be allocated to the city's general fund as has been done in the past, and the other \$25 be directed to any city or other community program or project as proposed by the mayor and approved by city council," Marks continued.

Dudley, however, told council that if \$10 covers administrative costs that's all that should be charged. "We are not a profit-making business," she said.

DUDLEY COMPARED Marks'

proposed \$35 fee to the \$25 fee charged businesses for an operating license.

Other than the basic administrative costs, the only other demand on the city is the mayor's time, which is included in his \$3,700 annual salary, Dudley said.

When asked his opinion, Bibeau said, "I suppose the mayor's time is a legitimate consideration of the cost to the city." He added that the city council probably could justify any reasonable fee increase.

Further lobbying his proposal, Marks told council that "the records show that over 30 percent of individuals who have been married, are relatives of, but not residents of, our city. Further, it is my view that this is not an obligation but an accommodation on the part of any mayor."

Dudley disagreed. "I don't think it's an accommodation. I think it's an honor (to be asked to perform a wedding ceremony)."

A mayor who doesn't have the time or desire to perform weddings can decline the invitation, Dudley added.

WHILE THE majority of the council was willing to approve the \$25 increase, Marks' suggestion to redirect the revenue drew concern.

"I am concerned since Mrs. Dudley brought it up... whether the city can legally redirect revenue to the community center, Soronen said.

City attorney Paul Bibeau told council he had his doubts whether the city could legally use the \$25 increase for the community center. But he told council he would review

the request and report back.

If redirecting the additional revenue to the community center could be illegal, Soronen asked council whether performing the wedding ceremony is worth \$35 when all revenue might be kept in the general fund.

Councilman Terry Sever also questioned Marks' proposal. "Other organizations out there could feel slighted," he said.

Marks proposed allocating revenue to the Farmington Community Center "because they provide a great variety of services to the community, are not tax supported, and have currently been involved with a campaign for funding to help make many improvements that are needed if this institution is to survive."



Snowy creation

Saturday's 7 1/2-inch snowfall produced a slew of snowmen throughout the Farmington area, but none perhaps as creative as this 7-footer on Violet in Farmington. Its creators included (from left) Sue Duquette of Farmington Hills, Barb Nottzel of Livonia, Carolyn DeLair of Detroit and homeowner Sue Kin. Sue Kin and her husband, Chuck, also made an 8-foot snowman on the side of their house. Each snowman took three hours to make. "It was great fun," said Sue Kin. Sue Duquette agreed. "I've been waiting all year for snow." Said Barb: "I'm a Michigander all the way."

BOB SKLAR/staff photographer

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