

Delinquency fighters eye regional meeting

By Bob Sklar and
Jeane Madzowski
staff writers

The community coalition formed to help combat teen rowdiness along Orchard Lake Road plans to contact nearby communities in hopes of sharing insight into youth gangs.

"We hope to meet with other police departments to see if we're having similar problems. If we are, we hope to look at them on a larger scale so we don't just shift one community's problems to a community next door," said Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

The Committee for the Prevention of Teenage Delinquency — which counts parents, educators, merchants and ethnic leaders among its members — is considering hosting a cross-community seminar "to foster an open, frank discussion," Farmington Hills City Councilman Terry Sever said.

"The seminar hopefully would identify what our common problems are and what people are doing about them," he said.

Communities bordering Farmington Hills, as well as others that can provide evidence of what has or has not worked, would be invited, Sever said.

THE NINE-MEMBER coalition met for the first time Monday at the Farmington Hills Police Department. Its mission is to "identify problems, seek solutions and exchange information," Nebus said.

It intends to not only identify what's drawing troubling attention to Orchard Lake Road, but also follow felony arrests through the courts.

"We also plan to determine whether hotel parties need to be included under the house party ordinance," Nebus said.

That ordinance holds adults in control of an open house party criminally responsible if they know, or should reasonably know, minors are drinking and they fail to take reasonable steps to try to prevent it.

"Should adults who rent hotel rooms be held criminally responsible (for minors who drink at room parties)?" Nebus asked.

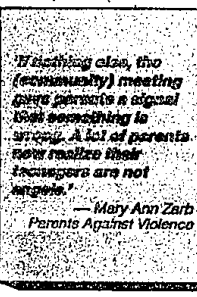
IN SEVER'S view, the coalition's organizational meeting was highly productive.

"With some of the emotion now swirling the group came to a point to dig into needs — into what we can accomplish from the parent standpoint, the city standpoint and the legal standpoint," Sever said.

There's a basic understanding that problems aren't going to be solved by just changing laws or passing ordinances.

There's an understanding of a sense of responsibility that goes beyond that, particularly with parents," Sever said.

Police Chief William Dwyer has not a coalition member, but has helped



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coordinate the group. He sees each member having a responsibility as the group moves toward developing solutions.

"Members will filter information back to the parents. The police department will be pivotal," he said.

The seed for the Committee for the Prevention of Teenage Delinquency was planted at a community meeting sponsored by newly formed Parents Against Violence. The Jan. 14 meeting drew more than 400 parents, teenagers, merchants and police officers to discuss and define what's been happening along Orchard Lake Road, between 12 mile and 14 mile — Farmington Hills major retail corridor.

AT THE community meeting, Dwyer unveiled a 13-point action



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plan that also included beefed-up police patrols, increased curfew enforcement, an anonymous tip hotline and passage of a loitering ordinance.

Although the two-hour, emotion-packed meeting didn't pinpoint the reasons for the rowdiness along Orchard Lake Road, Mary Ann Zarb, a founder of Parents Against Violence, is optimistic it can be controlled.

"If nothing else, the meeting gave parents a signal that something is wrong. A lot of parents now realize their teenagers are not angels," Zarb said, adding that since the meeting, many parents have made their teenagers find jobs.

"I think it made a lot of people angry when the kids stood up and said, 'Entertain us,'" Zarb said, referring to teen complaints of boredom.

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Council watcher Aldo Vagnozzi agreed.

"I think the criminal penalty ought to be assessed if something (assault or carrying a concealed weapon, for example) besides the loitering happens," Vagnozzi said. "I don't think loitering by itself should be considered a criminal act with criminal penalties assessed."

BUT MANY demanded criminal penalties.

"I feel you have to have severe penalties. We have to stop this gathering of groups in areas where they're not supposed to be," said Barry Fogel, a leader of Parents Against Violence, which formed in response to reported teen problems on Orchard Lake Road.

Council members also demanded criminal penalties.

"This very nice place to live is being threatened. I believe the time has come to be tough," Councilman Joe Alkateeb said. "The time has come to act. There are many bad cities where the council decided



Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department speaks at the Jan. 14 community meeting.

to be nice."

Mayor Ben Marks and Councilman Donn Wolf also offered support of the compromise ordinance.

Councilwoman Judy Soronen — who last week joined Dudley in opposition of criminal penalties — changed her mind this week.

"I gave it a great deal of thought. I would not have agreed with the ordinance reading that would make it a misdemeanor the first time around (first violation)," she said. "I'm still not real comfortable with it. But I realize they (police) need something meaningful and effective to do their job."

WHEN SHE opposed criminal penalties the previous week, Soronen said she objected to the possibility that a teenager would receive a criminal record for violating the loitering ordinance.

Kim Kain, Hunters Square-Tally Hall general manager, also supported the loitering ordinance. "On behalf of the Hunters Square-Tally Hall merchants, we'd like to go on record in support of the proposed loitering ordinance," she said, adding the regulations will be a great help to Orchard Lake Road merchants.

Language in the proposed ordinance is identical to the emergency ordinance except for the addition of criminal penalties. Ordinance adoption is expected next week.

Under the ordinance, anyone "found standing or idling in or about any store, shop, or business or commercial establishment" and that behavior "causes interference or disorder of the normal course of business" can be ticketed and fined up to \$500 for the first violation. Any subsequent violation, however, will be considered a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$500 and 90 days in jail.

IT WILL also be a violation to hinder or impede vehicles or pedestrians going to or from establishments and also to refuse to leave after being told to do so by the owner, his representative or a police officer.

Vagnozzi, however, took exception to the ordinance's failure to specifically address loitering on private property. The ordinance could be used against those participating in peaceful demonstrations and pickets, Vagnozzi said.

"It would feel better if it spelled out that it's private property," Vagnozzi said.

But city attorney Paul Bibeau disagreed. "This does not address itself to public property," he said, adding that picketing and demonstrating must be done on public property rather than private, which would be interpreted as trespassing.

Dudley agreed with Vagnozzi. "I share Mr. Vagnozzi's concern about this entire thing. The concern about clarity whether it concerns private or public property is a legitimate one."

CALLING the ordinance's detailing of where loitering cannot take place, "repetitious gibberish," Dudley said, the words "private, non-identical property" should be used instead.

Bibeau, however, said the ordinance's wording should remain because it has been legally tested.



Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department speaks at the Jan. 14 community meeting.

AMONG THE coalition's charges is to review existing ordinances.

"We need tougher laws. I understand the police department's frustration," Zarb said. "We will also try to get educational programs going."

Although Zarb is upset a curfew for minors is needed — when parents should be controlling their children's hours and activities — she believes curfew ordinances should be extended to cover teens older than 15.

"They (teens) have no business out until midnight. None," she said.

Sever believes coalition concerns also should focus on where teenagers will go when they are asked to leave Orchard Lake Road. He observed teenage activity along the corridor Friday night, Jan. 16.

"I personally followed some individuals (teenagers) that were encouraged to leave 7-Eleven and other areas. Where will they go when

they are encouraged to leave where it's obvious? I saw one car go into a residential area toward West Bloomfield and another toward Southfield," he said.

YET SEVER believes recent publicity about Orchard Lake Road has drawn a lot of teenagers and adults eager to see what's going on.

"I talked with some kids Friday night (Jan. 16). A lot of kids were in cars, in groups, out for a Friday night and they decided to see what was happening on Orchard Lake," he said.

As an Orchard Lake Road business owner, Sever said he wasn't aware of the extent of the problems until he drove and then later joined police patrols along the thoroughfare.

Conny Establow, owner of the Ram's Horn restaurant on Orchard Lake Road, lauded beefed-up police patrols.

In December, his restaurant, particularly the parking lot, was the site of youth confrontations that prompted parents to seek out the media for publicity.

"Things are back to normal," he said.

In addition to Nebus, Sever, Zarb and Establow, Committee for the Prevention of Teenage Delinquency members include: Barry Fogel of Parents Against Violence; Ralph Ayar of Southfield Manor, a Chaldean club; Betty Nicolay of Farmington Families in Action; Kimberly Kain, Tally Hall manager; and Don Cowan, North Farmington High School principal.

Loitering law gains a sharper bite

Continued from Page 1

SHE TOLD council she disagreed with those who thought a \$500 fine would have little effect because to many in the community, it's a pittance. "We're passing it this way because a few won't be deterred by the fines," she said, adding the amount of the fine should not be left to judicial discretion.

The ordinance is designed to serve only as a deterrent. "No one is hurt. No one is victimized," she said.

Dudley also told the council that after detailing her objection the previous week when council enacted a 35-day emergency ordinance, she would not waste time reiterating her feelings.

"I don't think that they (criminal charges) are any more effective for this kind of conduct than civil penalties," Dudley said last week. "In fact, the imposition of monetary fines may be more strongly carried out in addition to that. I think that most people having to pay money is more of an immediate penalty. Immediacy is a much more effective

penalty."

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