

Decision day delayed

On 2 city boards? You'll have to select 1

By Joanna Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills board and commission members who were preparing to resign one or more of their appointments by April 1 — as required by new city policy — can relax.

Less than a month after council members adopted a policy limiting one person to one board or commission to encourage more residents' involvement, they have changed it.

Councilwoman Joan Dudley told the council March 9 the many replacements would be needed in a relatively short period of time — under the April 1 deadline. — would

be quite a burden "we would not want to foist on" mayor.

INSTEAD OF having to make up their minds by April 1, the 13 residents who serve on more than one board or commission can wait until their earliest term expires.

At that time, the resident must choose which board or commission to continue serving. The resident's choice for one of the boards will serve as resignation notice for the other.

Dudley's concerns about how replacements would be found for board members with dual membership prompted the change in policy that was originally suggested by

Mayor Ben Marks.

BUT DUDLEY said she was also concerned that with the number of required appointments, there's the possibility of "literally stacking the deck with mayoral political cronies or political enemies."

Most council members agreed with Dudley that the task of finding enough qualified replacements for many existing board members — many whose names are synonymous with the particular board — would be too great.

Though the idea was eventually cast aside, Dudley suggested — with other council members' support — that each council member should be

responsible for providing the mayor with names of several potential nominees.

"I think there are people out in the community . . . if we went searching," councilwoman Jan Dolan said.

But councilman Donn Wolf disagreed with the suggestion as well as with the policy.

"I guess I don't see the great damage in letting people serve on two commissions unless it's a conflict," Wolf said, adding that he doesn't see volunteers "lining up at the door" to serve on boards and commissions.

"We're going to lose a lot of good people on these commissions," he added.

AFTER LISTENING to suggestions on how to find replacements, Marks finally suggested rescinding the policy. Efforts, he said, would be made to achieve the one person-one position concept.

"I don't really have any particular way of handling this. I think we know what we have to do," Marks said.

Yet, Marks acknowledged that certain long-term and active commission members "are the commission."

Other council members, however, reminded Marks that there are probably plenty of qualified people who would be just as involved with commission and board work as those currently serving.

"I'm not going to shirk the job," Marks said.

Spelling stars

earn spotlight

Peggy Rhlen, a Power Middle School eighth grader, was runner-up representing Farmington Public Schools in the area spelling bee March 2 at West Hills Junior High in Bloomfield Hills.

The spelling bee, for students in grades five-eight, is co-sponsored by the Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield and The Detroit News. Ten Farmington schools participated.

Top spellers from each of the participating Farmington schools included: Matt Zimmerer from Eagle Elementary, Ashlee Nelson from Planders Elementary, George Nagrant from Forest Elementary, Michael Placco from Gill Elementary, Melissa Dutton from William Grace Elementary, Vanessa Smith from Larkshire Elementary and Christine Whitehead from Longacre Elementary.

Participating middle school students included Deldre Heinde of Duncel, Julia Ritter of East and Rhlen from Power.

Students were selected to represent their school through class and grade level spelling bees, according to organizers.

Classroom staffs and gifted coordinators "put the bees in" in written work and increased vocabulary and motivation for these hopes of increasing better spelling skills.



BARBARA HUGHES/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Peggy Rhlen, 14-year-old spelling whiz from Power Middle School, with the dictionary she won in the area spelling bee. She's an eighth grader at Power.

Firefighters hone skills

Three Farmington Hills Fire Department members attended the 39th annual Michigan Fire Service Instructor's Conference Feb. 22-25 in Clare.

Lt. Thomas Shurtliff, training officer Ronald Schwartz and firefighter Kevin Berche were among 10 instructors from fire departments and related agencies across Michigan who registered for the conference.

State Rep. Francis Spaniolis, D-Corunna, opened the conference by saying Michigan's 30,000 firefighters should unite in presenting their fire service needs to the Legislature.

The three-day program offered instructors an opportunity to refine their teaching methods, view a variety of audiovisual and printed materials, and share their experiences.

As certified instructors, the Hills representatives present classes

scheduled through the Firefighter's Training Council and provide in-service training for the Farmington Hills Fire Department under the supervision of Chief Richard Marinucci.

Richard Elyson, Troy deputy fire chief, is president of the 169-member Michigan Fire Service Instructor's Association. He presented a certificate of participation to Shurtliff, Schwartz and Berche at the close of the conference Feb. 24.

ACCORDING TO Richard Powell, Firefighters Training Council executive secretary, formal instruction in firefighting and other emergency procedures is of increasing importance in Michigan for several reasons.

On Feb. 25, the Right-To-Know Law took effect. This legislation defines the authority and responsibility

ties of the local fire chief in determining all hazardous chemicals housed or handled by manufacturers and distributors within the jurisdiction of the local fire department. After determining that hazardous chemicals are present, the fire chief must develop an emergency plan.

Also, a new bill will go before the Legislature this spring proposing that all firefighters, including chiefs and recruits, must receive a minimum of 36 hours of in-service training annually in subject matter consistent with the curriculum of the Firefighter's Training Council.

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