

# Hills open space policy revamped

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

**B**UILDERS AND developers in Farmington Hills have yet another new subdivision open space policy to follow.

The newest policy — a result of a year's work between Farmington Hills staff, developers and builders — caps a long series of events, policies and discussions over subdivision open spaces and some developers' laxity in completing them.

Following an almost hour-long discussion, the new policy was approved in a 4-0 vote Sept. 28. Councilmembers Jan Dolan, Donn Wolf and Jody Soronen were absent.

Concerns by developers and some council members in November 1986

— several months after the former policy was adopted — prompted city staff to take the open space completion regulations back to the drawing board.

Like the former policy, adopted in August 1986, the new policy requires completion of a subdivision's open space before a developer receives all building permits.

The former policy required open space completion before the fifth building permit was issued. The new policy allows up to 50 percent of the permits to be issued before open space completion or until June 15 of the year after the actual recording of the plat.

"That's when the actual clock starts," said Thomas Blasell, public services director.

THE NEW policy also requires an escrow account equaling 150 percent of the cost of proposed improvements and a schedule from developers of what improvements will be made and when. The schedule is due before the first building permit is issued.

"That [schedule] is to prevent a particular developer from waiting until the last minute to play all the angles," Blasell said.

The schedule — designed to take into account the time of year, growing seasons, type of improvements and plans for completion — drew the most comments from the council.

Council members Joan Dudley and Jody Soronen insisted that the council receive a copy of the schedule. Jim Ginn, a Southfield attorney who represents some of the area's develop-

ers, told the council that the schedule is "a club" for city administrators.

The schedule allows administrators to keep tabs on the developers and push them along when necessary, Blasell said.

"The problem is they (administrators) have the club, they need us to wield it," Sever said.

**BOTH SEVER and Dudley** said they felt a copy of the schedule was necessary because it's the city council that has the authority to give developers variances on open space completion plans.

"It is the developer's, this is his or her schedule," Blasell said. "It is not something the city administration is imposing on them. They (developers)

would be hard-pressed to come to you and say that the schedule is unreasonable. It is their schedule."

Councilman Joe Alkateeb disagreed with Sever and Dudley. As council members, he said, it is not their job to "keep a log" on the subdivisions or on the open spaces.

"I am not hung up about the schedule. If city manager Mr. (William) Costick and his staff can't do it, I'll find another Mr. Costick," Alkateeb said.

But Sever and Dudley prevailed. Administrators assured them the council would receive a copy of developers' schedules when administrators receive them.

Dudley also took exception to the new policy's lack of specific written notice to house buyers — in subdivi-

sions with open spaces — of the open space policy. "I think this is a little vague," she added.

**ATTORNEY GINN** agreed with Dudley. "This does not say shall inform the purchaser in writing." But Ginn said it's also difficult to summarize the entire policy in a few paragraphs.

City manager Costick was taken up on his offer to draft a form that's easily adaptable for each subdivision's unique open space requirements and completion dates. Buyers would receive the form when they receive their closing documents for their new houses.

The council added a specific requirement that buyers receive written notice of the open space requirements.

## Provisions of new policy are released

The new Farmington Hills open space policy requires completion of all improvements in planned residential developments (PRD) and open space plats before all building permits are issued.

The new policy is designed to ensure that all developers' open space plans are completed in a timely manner and that potential home buyers are aware of when the open spaces are to be completed, according to city staff.

Major items in the new policy include:

- Developers are required to establish escrow accounts to cover 150 percent of the actual cost of improvements.
- Up to 50 percent of the building permits in the subdivision will be issued before open space completion or until June 15th of the year following actual recording of the plat, whichever comes first.
- A preliminary approval on the open space will be granted and escrow will be reduced 25-50 percent depending on the amount of planning.
- A year following the preliminary approval, a refund of escrow funds will be given if all improvements are acceptable. If not, a developer has 60 days in which to complete the work.
- If deadlines listed on a work schedule are not met, building permits will be withheld.

• If satisfactory progress is not made on open space completion and it appears deadlines will not be met, permits may be withheld.

• The developer is obligated to tell the builders of the restrictions when he sells the lots. The city's open space policy must be referenced in all open space agreements for the subdivisions.

• The open space must be completed no later than two years following the granting of preliminary approval of the open space plans.

• A provision for granting variances by the city council is included to allow developers to plead special circumstances. A hearing will be

held before a variance is denied or granted.

"The developer must present facts to the city council, which would make strict compliance with the provisions of this policy unreasonable or impractical," according to the policy.

## Developer given new deadline

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staff writer

The new Farmington Hills open space policy was less than an hour old before it was put to work.

In a 3-1 vote Sept. 28, the city council allowed developers of the Trinity Land Ltd. to complete the still unfinished open space improvements in the Green Valley Estates subdivision under the new provisions. Councilwoman Joan Dudley opposed the action. Councilmembers Jan Dolan, Donn Wolf and Jody Soronen were absent.

"When they (the developers) get their open space approval, they know what they were expected to do," Dudley said.

**DEVELOPERS WERE** given until Oct. 30 to complete the remaining open space improvements. They will also receive an additional seven

building permits (50 percent of the building permits allowed to be issued under the new policy).

Developers had requested a waiver under the former policy, which prevented them from obtaining a fifth building permit until the open space was completed. City staff recommended that the city council deny the waiver because certain items that were supposed to be finished in the five-acre open space are still incomplete.

One of the Trinity Land developers informed the city council that they intend to finish the open space as soon as possible but that certain items, such as installation of bridges and pathways have been delayed by contractors. Developers said they had also faced other delays following platting.

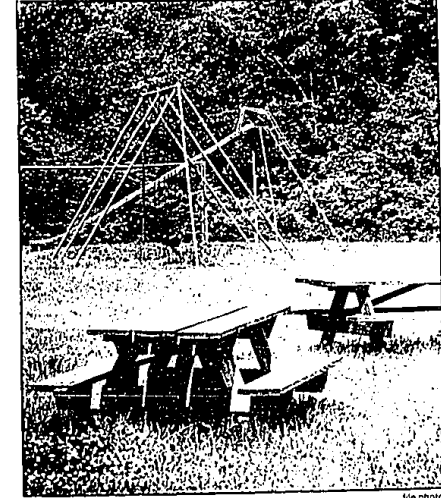
**CITY STAFF** had recommended the city council deny the waiver be-

cause certain items that were supposed to be finished in the five-acre open space are still incomplete. Green Valley Estates is at Nine Mile and Halsted.

Other developers in the city completing open space plans approved under the former policy at the time, said assistant city manager David Call and public services director Thomas Blasell.

City council members, however, acknowledged that some residents waiting to move into their houses in Green Valley Estates were in the dilemma. Because Trinity Land Ltd. has not completed the open space improvements, their building permits have been withheld and work on new houses has stopped.

"I don't feel it's correct that we have to be put under pressure because these residents out there are chomping at the bit," Mayor Bob Marks said.



This is an example of an open space in a Farmington Hills subdivision. Such areas are often used for passive recreation or leisure activities by residents of the surrounding subdivision. It could be considered as a mini-park.

## business briefs

If you recently opened a shop, captured an award, earned a promotion or are planning a new venture or project — and there's a Farmington-area business angle — we'd like to hear from you so we can share your news from within other Farmington Observer readers. Send items to: Short takes, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington

### • JOINS STAFF

Jennifer Clarke of Farmington Hills has joined the staff of the Metropolitan Detroit Convention & Visitors Bureau as manager-group tour and international.

Her duties include promoting Detroit internationally and serving as head of the group tour department.

Before joining the bureau, Clarke served as tour and travel sales representative for the Hotel St. Regis in Detroit. She has held positions with Boyne Highlands, Harbor Springs, Top Value Incentives, Dayton, Ohio; and Crimson Travel Service, Boston.

Clarke is a member of Circle Michigan, National Tour Association, American Bus Association and Travel Industry Association.

### • GRAND OPENING

Century 21 of Michigan has announced the grand opening of Century 21 Elegant Homes, 23160 Lahser, Suite 120, Southfield.

"The Southfield real estate market is very viable, a lot of buyers here Southfield because of its family oriented environment, good school system, good services," said Ronald Simpson, broker/owner for the new office.

With 15 years' experience in the real estate business, Simpson employs a staff of 10 licensed sales agents. He also operates a Century 21 Elegant Homes office on James Couzens in Detroit.

In addition to Southfield, Century 21 Elegant Homes will provide real estate services to Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Franklin as well as the Detroit area.

With the addition of Century 21 Elegant Homes, Century 21 of Michigan, the state's largest real estate organization, now has 255 offices throughout Michigan serviced by 4,800 sales agents.

Part of the largest real estate sales organization in the nation, nearly one out of every six homes sold in Michigan currently involve a Century 21 of Michigan salesperson.

### • BIDS AWARDED

The Farmington Hills City Council has authorized the city manager to add the extension of the water system at Pioneer Park to the contract with Gerlach Landscaping for up to \$55,600. Sprinkler Services is the subcontractor. The extension will ensure a playable turf on the ball field for early next summer and thereafter, said Dan Potter, special services director.

### • 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Alfred L. Deutsch of Farmington Hills is one of 99 members of the State Bar of Michigan to mark their 50th year in the practice of law in 1987.

The lawyers began their careers in the year that Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated for his second term as president, the dirigible "Hindenburg" blew up in Lakehurst, N.J., and Joe Louis won the heavyweight boxing title.

They were honored at the annual bar banquet Sept. 17.

### • NAMED TO BOARD

Jeffery Zaks of Farmington Hills was named to the board at Providence Hospital, Southfield.

### • NAMED CHAIRMAN

Mitchell Robins, CPA, was recently named chairman of Robins & Associates, P.C., CPAs.

The certified public accounting firm, at 33469 14 Mile, Suite 30, Farmington Hills, provides financial consultation and accounting services to small businesses, small manufacturing concerns, retail establishments and professionals.

The telephone number is 661-3500.

### • AUDIT PARTNER

John Stockdale of Farmington Hills was named audit partner in valuation services in the Detroit office.

Stockdale joined Coopers & Lybrand in 1975 as a specialist in the Engineering & Valuation Group at the firm's New York City office.

He also held the positions of supervisor, Engineering & Valuation Group manager, Valuation Group, before joining the Detroit office in 1983 as director of valuation services.

business valuation for Business Valuation Review and Michigan Family Law Journal.

He is a member of the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Institute of Business Appraisers.

### • NEW DIRECTOR

Providence Hospital has appointed Kenneth Bouchard of Farmington as director of audiology.

He will serve as director of audiology for the Greater Detroit Otolaryngology Center, an affiliation between the hospital and the Greater Detroit Otolaryngology Group. He will have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of both departments, as well as overseeing patient care.

He comes to Providence and the Greater Detroit Otolaryngology Center from Hearing Associates, Inc. Havre de Grace, Md., where he was president.

He was formerly an audiologist with the Department of Communication Disorders at Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit, and a clinical research associate and assistant department manager with the Department of Otolaryngology, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak.

Bouchard was also an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Audiology, Wayne State School of Medicine.

He has been published in the field of otology and audiology, and has received extensive grant support for vestibular and hearing research.

Bouchard is a member of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Association of Research in Otolaryngology, American Auditory Society, Acoustical Society of America and Academy of Dispensing Audiologists.

He also has initiated a new service at Providence Hospital. Intraoperative electrophysiological monitoring measures nerve pathways and follows their function throughout surgery thus reducing the potential of nerve damage.

### • OUTSTANDING EFFORT

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce is pleased to recognize one of its members for outstanding achievements. Jody Soronen, executive director.

"One of our long-time members, Chip Habermehl of Center Tire Co., 23534 Farmington Road, Farmington, has been given an Award of Excellence by the Akron Firestone Tire & Rubber Co., Akron, Ohio," Soronen said.



## PERSONAL APPEARANCE

- Sketching classes
- writing art
- 30 min. hair salon
- October 5
- 1 hour
- October 9
- Birmingham
- Bring your child
- or a photograph
- for her level
- caricatures.
- Black & white, \$7.
- color, \$12. Also
- drawing workshops
- 10-10:30 a.m. for
- pre-school kids;
- 3:30-4 p.m. for
- school kids.
- Drawing books, \$2.

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Until 6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday