

Day care splits hopefuls

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newcomers Vernon Kieplinski, 33, Raymond Cassar, 28, Richard Lytwynuk, 39, and John Heenan, 50.

The one-hour debate, taped for cable television, allowed only five questions to be asked. Two of those questions involved child home day care.

DRAWING ON past city council actions, residents demanded to know whether candidates support council regulations enacted in May allowing in-home child day care in residential areas. A later city council provision allowing two larger operations — which do not meet the new regulations — a two-year extension and review also drew audience queries.

"I fought hard against it," said Alkateeb, an electrical engineer. "Business has no business in our residential areas."

The city council acted "properly" in allowing child day care homes for a maximum six children, Alkateeb said. He added that his opposition to the larger group homes for a maximum 12 children, which require an employee other than the operator, was because the candidates agreed with Alkateeb, though some were more hard-hitting than their comments.

Fox, the former chairman of the zoning board of appeals, said that allowing the operations would be a stepping stone to allowing other types of businesses in neighborhoods. The ZBA steadfastly opposed child day care in residential areas.

"I'm not so much in favor of the care centers," said Cassar, an attorney and college instructor. He referred to the proliferation of the two-income families in need of child day care. Without offering a strong opinion, Cassar said he would "be open to new ideas."

DUDLEY STOOD by the city council's actions. "I believe in the ordinance we passed and the test for the two homes (the larger group homes) for a maximum 12 children."

"Unlike some of my colleagues, I have an open mind," she said, adding she is willing to wait two years before making a final decision on the homes.

In a question directed specifically at Dudley, a resident asked why the councilwoman insisted that the ZBA should not be the body to review — under provisions of the city ordinance — whether child day care homes would negatively affect traffic of adjacent residences.

"I said it wasn't fair to send a proposition to a board with a closed

mind," Dudley responded. Her opinion, she said, was based on a letter from the ZBA that said the review board opposed child day care homes, of any size, in residential areas.

Fox agreed that the ZBA recommended denial of any regulations allowing child day care in neighborhoods. But she added, "We did not feel we were being backed by the city council."

VAGNOZZI CHARGED that the question was unfair. Regulations and details of the ordinance allowing child day care were established by the whole city council, not Dudley alone, he said.

Vagnozzi also chided Sever for expressing his opposition to the larger group homes allowing a maximum 12 children. Sever, Vagnozzi said, voted with the majority to continue to allow the two licensed group homes to operate for two years, followed by a review.

Cassar said he believes "limited child care" is appropriate and favors the two-year test period for the group homes.

Kieplinski lashed out on the issue. "I get sick and tired of children becoming a tool between business and politics. Where would you like to see children go?" he asked. "I suggest you come up with a solution that's better than we can do."

Candidates queried on tax increases

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Taxes and who would vote an increase drew a variety of responses from the nine Farmington Hills City Council candidates Thursday at the last public debate of the campaign.

Incumbents Joe Alkateeb, Joan Dudley and Terry Sever offered the most detailed responses to the query that was in part based on incomplete information. The questioner wanted to know whether the candidates would vote to increase taxes — even if below the 10-mill charter limit — without a vote of the people.

The questioner, however, didn't point out that the city charter gives the city council the authority to increase taxes without a vote of the people, up to 10 mills actually less when the Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment is calculated.

Still, candidates offered their

opinions. From their responses, however, it was unclear whether some of the candidates understood the question.

Council watcher Aldo Vagnozzi loudly responded, "No, because it's illegal." Others, including part-time activist Jean Fox, who responded simply, "never," and self-employed businessman Richard Lytwynuk, "No."

ATTORNEY AND college instructor Raymond Cassar told the audience of about 50 that he would seek a vote of the people before increasing taxes. Private investigator John Heenan agreed. "I would not be for raising taxes without voter approval."

Vernon Kieplinski, a maintenance worker, also said he would not increase taxes. "You can get only so much blood out of a turnip"

The incumbents, on the other hand, explained why taxes were raised in previous years. Alkateeb told the audience that in 1987, taxes were decreased because additional money wasn't needed.

Dudley spoke of the tax increase years as times when improvements — paid for with increased taxes — were necessary, such as roads and parks. And she vowed to increase taxes within the 10-mill charter limit if improvements and other needs demand an increase and times were good.

Sever agreed. "Let's not forget it's easy to make promises," he said, adding that costs for trash, for example, could increase and require more tax money to keep pace. "If our health, safety and welfare are ever threatened, I don't have a problem with raising taxes."

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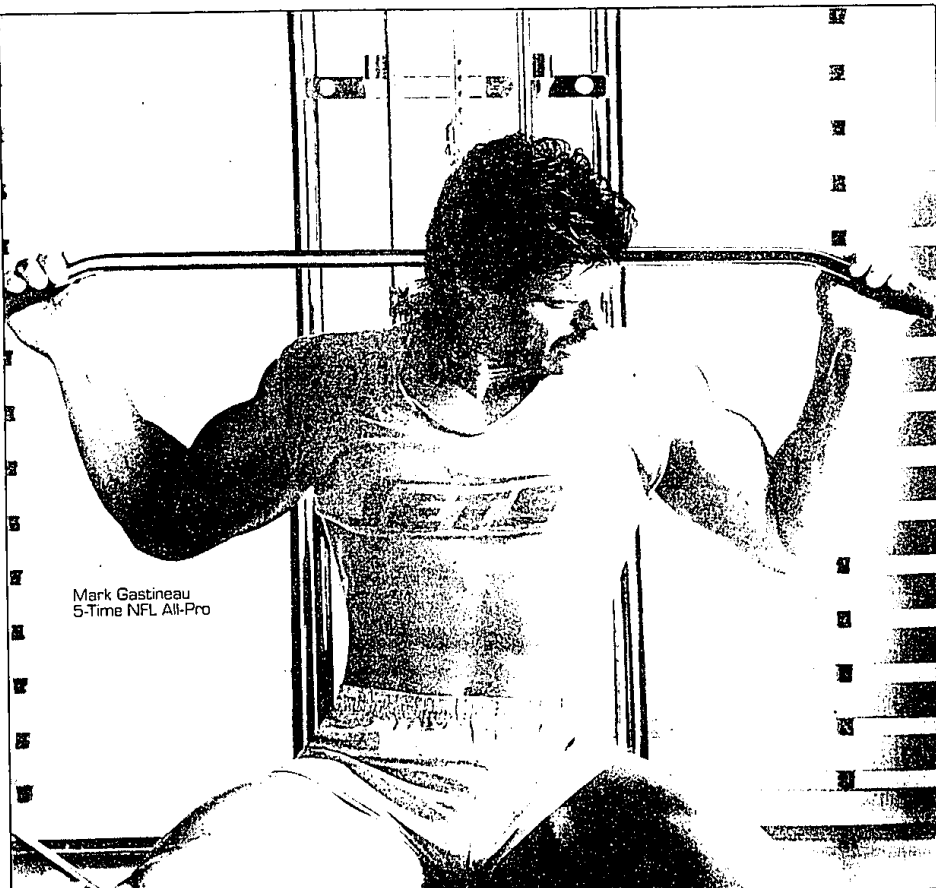
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