

# DDA adopts guidelines for banner use

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Groups can now promote community, cultural and general interest events on colorful banners that line the thoroughfares in downtown Farmington.

The Downtown Development Authority voted Tuesday to approve a set of guidelines for groups, allowing them to use the 22 banner brackets to advertise their particular events throughout the year.

The brackets were installed on utility poles last fall; red and white seasonal campaign banners were bought to enhance the new image

being touted by the DDA for the downtown business district. An additional 10-12 usable poles are available if the DDA chooses to add more brackets and banners in the future, according to Wendy Strip Sittsamer, DDA executive director.

"It's important to encourage participation," the director said, "and it's important the DDA provide some kind of guidance and have something to say about what types of banners are used."

Groups using the banners must make a written request to the DDA at least 90 days in advance of the proposed use. They will pay approximately \$100 per banner, which in-

cludes costs for printing the banner, renting the brackets and hardware and a fee for installing and removing the banners.

A committee headed by DDA member John Donohue will review banner proposals for approval and coordinate with other seasonal efforts so other events can be promoted effectively.

THE BANNERS may be placed downtown for no less than two weeks and no more than 90 days, according to the guidelines. Promotion of special events will be allowed up to 30 days before the event. Although the DDA encourages groups to use all 22

banner sites, they will accommodate those wishing to use less.

The state of Michigan, which issued a permit for the banners that line the state trunkline of Grand River, prohibits commercial or political advertising on the banners, according to Strip Sittsamer, although the DDA board did not see a problem with sponsorship of a community event by a business.

Guidelines for other cities, including Portage and Kalamazoo in western Michigan, were reviewed before the Farmington guidelines were written.

Although the DDA unanimously

approved the guidelines, DDA member Ron Oglesby raised a concern about liability in renting out the hardware for use by other groups. "I'm concerned with the legal arguments," he said. "I realize we're (the DDA) covered as an extension of the city. Making it available to other organizations — that's my concern."

City manager Robert Deadman, also a DDA member, called today's liability issue "a cost of doing business." The DDA was created by action of the city council and its members are appointed by the mayor.

"The liability issue we just face every day with everything we do," he said, speaking for the city. "We're

all in it together. We're the obvious target because of our deep pockets."

Another concern raised was the total \$2,200 cost to an organization if it rented the entire 22 brackets for banners. Deadman said "cost is not going to drive them away" because the initial investment of banners can be used year after year for an annual event.

Strip Sittsamer said copies of the DDA guidelines would be sent to local groups who might have an interest in using banners. The DDA is expected to discuss its own use of banners for the coming year at the group's regular meeting in February.

## New sign type suggested

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Eight downtown Farmington merchants on the north side of Grand River want to install specially designed signs, which, they say, will add a unique quality to the central business district.

But city officials say such a proposal will require a change in the city's sign ordinance. And they may need to get state permission because the proposed signs would hang in the state right-of-way along Grand River.

"Clearly, what they're proposing is prohibited now," said city manager

Robert Deadman after reviewing the city ordinance book. "I personally believe in some ways they're (signs) good, some bad. It just depends on how well it's done — that we have trouble controlling."

The group of merchants approached the city's Downtown Development Authority this week, requesting support for their concept, which shows a decorative sign hanging at right angles to the storefronts. The signs would identify businesses generically, such as a local bookstore being labeled for "books" or a florist for "flowers."

The DDA will take the concept to city planner Chris Waczny for an

opinion before making a decision to support the effort.

Skip Rosenthal, spokesman for the business group and owners of Books Abound, plans to attend a future city council meeting to address the issue with the city's decision-making body.

OTHER MERCHANTS listed as wanting to participate in such a project include Michele Mare's Florist, Farmington Watch Repair, Cowley's Old Village Inn, The Korner Barber, Farmington Shoe Repair, Clothes Encounter and Country Miniatures, the only store south of Grand River in the Village Mall.

The signs would add "a nostalgic flair" and a "uniformity" to the downtown district, said Greh Hohler, owner of the Civic Theatre and a member of the DDA board. He added, however, the signs would not necessarily have to be exactly the same.

DDA member Larry Lenchner warned the board about potential problems with such signs. "You've got to keep it really clean," he said. "If you don't do this in good taste, it can get so junked up. If you don't do it in good taste, you're better not doing it at all."

The group is suggesting the signage not only to identify the businesses to pedestrians, but to "contribute to the distinctive image being planned for the downtown," according to a DDA report.



LAURA CASTLE/staff photographer

### Before the storm

Charlotte Nastali of Farmington Hills and her granddaughter, Jessica of Livonia, enjoy a walk through the park at Independence Green Golf and Country Club at Halsted and

Grand River before wintry conditions set in the last week of December. Dressed for the weather, Jessica seems to relish the walk.

## Wholesale water rates rise

An increase in wholesale water and sewerage treatment rates is being proposed by the city of Detroit, which supplies many suburban communities with these services.

A public hearing on the increases, which usually occur this time each year, is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 20, at the Water Board Building in Detroit.

The proposed 5 percent increase is across-the-board for all wholesale water users for the city of Detroit,

according to a city of Farmington report.

Water rates for Farmington would increase from \$4 to \$4.21 per thousand cubic feet, according to the proposed changes. Sewerage treatment is proposed to increase from \$3.98 to \$4.19 per thousand cubic foot.

A \$7,226 credit for sewerage treatment overcharges in the previous year will help Farmington offset a portion of the rate increase, the city report said. The proposed changes will be used when the city begins the annual budget process.

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