

City OKs plan to review, update zoning laws

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Garbage dumpsters and drive-through, fast-food restaurants are nothing new.

But until a recent review of the city's zoning ordinances, older language, from as far back as the 1950s, did not recognize the existence of such modern conveniences.

The Farmington Planning Commission voted 9-0 Jan. 11 to recommend to the city council that the entire package of zoning ordinances be updated. According to city manager Robert Deadman, the updates are being proposed in conjunction with a total reclassification — a revision of the city code that is under way and expected to be completed this spring.

Planning commissioners William Ingalls, William Burke and Harry Lapham Jr. and city manager Deadman recently completed a sev-

eral-month review and revision of the city's zoning ordinances.

"It's not the most pleasant job, but it was something that had to be done," said commission chairman Norman Potts in praising the work of the subcommittee.

MANY OF the changes address office and commercial districts, some in the city's central business district, which is going through changes of its own this year with streetscape and sidewalk improvements.

Under the proposed changes, allowable height for buildings would be increased from 20 to 30 feet in R-1-O, or One Family Office Zoning, where office buildings add residential neighborhoods.

The increased height allows buildings to use gabled roofs, instead of the more traditional office buildings, which have flat roofs. It would also bring commercial buildings into

compliance with residential height maximums.

More interesting architectural styles such as colonial, cannot currently be used on an office building in R-1-O without a variance, Deadman added. "It pretty well throws design to a flat roof building."

IN ADDITION to height changes, more variety in types of business would be added to the R-1-O District under the proposed changes.

Financial, insurance and legal companies would be allowed in such areas. Special exceptions for computer services, electronic equipment companies and computer software design firms and similar companies could also be allowed by the planning commission.

Proposed changes for Central Business District Zoning would allow multifamily residential units in the downtown area and residential and non-residential uses within the same struc-

ture. Outside seating for restaurants would also be allowed; merchants must currently get special permission. The city council would be given the power to grant special exception uses in the Central Business District.

In the city's Cluster Housing Zoning, construction of a common area for a condominium development were added in the proposed zoning changes. A common must be finished when the development is half complete, or a letter of credit must be filed with the city in an amount sufficient to complete the area.

OTHER CHANGES proposed to the zoning ordinances would give planning commissioners either more or less power, depending on the situation.

In special exception uses, for example, the planning commission would replace the city's zoning board of appeals in making such decisions.

But even with such a regulation, "it's not possible to please everybody . . ." she added.

WILLIAM BURKE, a commissioner who worked on the city's original master plan, agreed a change was in order but said he had no problem with the way the city had been advising its residents.

"The lack of such a system has never been indicative of a deception," Burke said. "On the other hand . . . I think probably it would be worth considering another system."

Publicity sought for talks on city's plan

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Farmington residents should receive better notification when changes are proposed for the city's master plan, Oakland Street resident David Flanagan said Jan. 11.

Farmington planning commissioners concurred and directed city administration to draft an ordinance amendment giving "broader, more specific" notice to affected residents when master plan changes are proposed.

The ordinance change is to be

considered at the next commission meeting on Monday, Feb. 8.

The change was suggested at a public hearing Jan. 11, where comments on a revision of all the city's zoning ordinances was being discussed. Flanagan raised the issue because of a past situation, where he was concerned with the master plan and how it affected his downtown neighborhood.

HE SUGGESTED the commission consider written notification, by letter, to residents who live in the area where changes are pro-

posed, similar to what is done for a proposed zoning change.

This would allow residents interested in either keeping the master plan the same, or changing it, to speak at a public hearing. Currently, the city publishes such notification in the form of a legal advertisement in a local newspaper. "I can certainly see . . . the public trust involved" in making such a change, said commissioner Nancy Lawton. "I realize it is an inconvenience, but it's like a polite opportunity to notify those who have trusted us as a community."

Hills police recognized for unique service, duty

Based upon the recommendation of the Citation and Awards Committee Dec. 17, the Farmington Hills Police Department made the following awards:

● LIFE SAVING

Officer B. Schwartz, administered first aid to a 2-week-old infant who had stopped breathing.

● COMMENDATION

Officer R. Burkart, arrest of two suspects for breaking and entering of an occupied dwelling.

● CITATIONS

Officer A. Soderlund, arrested three subjects for robbery armed. Officer R. Tiderington, arrest of one suspect for receiving and concealing stolen property over \$100.

● UNIT CITATIONS

Officer S. Rochford, Officer N. Summers, Officer D. Fox: outstanding accomplishments of the Juvenile Section in 1987.

Sgt. D. Hochford, Sgt. C. Nebus, Officer B. Cook, Officer B. DeGrande, Officer C. Hubbard, Officer D. Krause, Officer D. Loe, Officer J. McKenzie, Officer P. Monti, secretary K. Gates, clerk, M. Miles: outstanding accomplishments of the Detective Section in 1987.

● CIVILIAN CITATION

District Fire Chief R. Rebtow, followed and provided information which led to the arrest of a driver for manslaughter with a motor vehicle.

● LETTER OF APPRECIATION

Officer P. Browne, handling of a medical emergency on Sept. 26 involving a victim of an industrial accident, which resulted in the victim regaining the use of his fingers.

Officer G. Kohls, assistance in the arrest of three subjects for robbery armed Aug. 12.

Homeless, police get aid

Local activist Darlene Feldman is encouraging churches, scout troop and other community groups to "adopt-a-precinct" to help urban police departments who must deal with the homeless.

Farmington Hills Harrison High School is one of the first groups to become involved by holding a blanket drive, she said.

"It has spread beyond Detroit," said Feldman, a Farmington Hills resident who recently started Operation Cover-up — an effort to bring blankets to Detroit's homeless during the recent sub-zero weather. Other cities, including Pontiac and Highland Park, are also in need and are benefitting from the community efforts.

The donation of blankets and boots and shoes "is helping people and saving lives in ways we didn't even think of," said Feldman.

POLICE OFFICERS are using the blankets not only for the homeless, but at the scenes of accidents where victims run the risk of going into shock, she said.

"I sincerely want to set this up . . . as something that will continue," she added.

Feldman said since her efforts began to distribute blankets on Detroit streets several weeks ago, she is receiving upwards of five calls per hour from people offering to help.

Any group interested in "adopting a precinct" should call 851-9027.

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