

# Council picks Marks as school board liaison

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Ben Marks will be the Farmington Hills City Council's first liaison to the Farmington school board.

Jody Soronen's appointment of Marks as liaison follows his initiation of the unprecedented first joint city council and school board meeting in December.

The appointment met with little comment, except from councilman Aldo Vagnozzi. "I'm glad we're doing this. It was something I'd like to have been considered for," he said.

Marks' first job will be to get to know the school board trustees. "He's very interested in having better relations (with school officials),"

said school trustee Helen Prutow, the school board's liaison to the city council. "The primary thing is to just keep in touch."

At this point, Marks doesn't have a plan to follow for his new duties. "I'm going to have to play it by ear. If the city is remotely involved or concerned, I can come back to the council with first-hand information. It's better getting it (information) on a first-hand basis."

Marks said he intends to attend school board meetings and do a lot of listening. "Whether I'll act as a member of the audience or otherwise, I'll have to figure it out."

Sull, Marks said he intends to respect the difference in responsibilities between the city

and the school district. "In no way am I going to try to fashion their policy."

Marks also is hoping school and city officials schedule another joint meeting within the next few months. Marks was instrumental in scheduling the first joint meeting in December.

The meeting was designed to allow elected officials in the schools and city to get to know each other and develop a better understanding of each others' points of view.

While there have been occasional rumors of rifts between the two political bodies, there's little doubt that administrators in the schools and city have a successful working relationship, Marks said.

"I DON'T ever think there has been an

adversarial situation (between the council and school board), but there has been an aura of that. I want to put that to rest once and for all," Marks told council members and school trustees.

At the December meeting, officials highlighted numerous ways the city and schools already work together, plus discussed other ways to cooperate in future ventures.

Police and fire programs in the schools, education programs through the parks and recreation department, sharing of election functions, community library programs, student government day, and school music groups entertaining at community events are examples of city-school cooperation.

## Board rescinds limits on board service

Policy sought to increase involvement

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

The death of a Farmington Hills City Council appointment policy produced far less fanfare than its controversial birth.

In a unanimous vote Monday, the city council rescinded its less-than-year-old policy, which has been publicly chided since its adoption in February 1987.

"I feel this policy, as adopted by the city council, is not in the best interest of the city," councilwoman Jean Fox said. The policy "discriminates against many of our citizens who have served our city long and faithfully."

Designed to entice newcomers to the city's boards and commissions and to limit long-serving members, the policy prohibited members from serving on more than one board at a time.

Council members said they prefer the mayor, as required by city charter, to have the discretion to make appointments, with council approval. If it's determined that a board member is serving on too many boards, the mayor can choose not to reappoint the person to one or more of the boards, council members said.

"I'm very happy we decided to go back and leave it in the hands of the

mayor," councilman Ben Marks said.

SOME MEMBERS, many now considered experts because of their knowledge and years of service on certain boards, were forced to choose which board they wished to continue serving.

Fox, a former member of three boards, including the city's two historic commissions and the zoning board of appeals, was forced to make such a decision before her city council election candidacy earlier this year.

The decision to rescind the policy was suggested last week by Marks, who originally suggested the policy in early 1987. At the time, councilwoman Jan Dolan and former councilwoman Joan Dudley were strong supporters.

Marks suggested rescinding the policy after councilman Aldo Vagnozzi suggested that some exceptions or clarification of the policy were needed. At the time, Marks said it didn't appear the policy enticed many newcomers' applications for appointment.

But Monday, a list of more than 60 new applicants, many applying for more than one board, was issued to the council. Whether the policy or the city's efforts to publicize the boards and commissions prompted the deluge of applications, isn't certain.

Councilman Terry Sever believes the policy should be credited. And he believes that with or without the policy, the mayor should heavily consider the new applications. "I like the idea of it (appointments) being spread around. I certainly think the mayor should take that into account."

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— Councilwoman Jean Fox

COUNCILWOMAN Jan Dolan echoed Sever's remarks. "I'm pleasantly surprised by the number of applicants that have come in."

Dolan said she encourages the mayor to consider the large number of applications in making appointments when many board and commission terms expire in February.

Advertising for applications through various media outlets — the Farmington Observer, city newsletter and cable television — was suggested by Vagnozzi shortly after his election in November.

Marks told the council that if any member cannot support a mayoral appointee, they should let the mayor know before appointment discussion to avoid public embarrassment.

Marks said he doesn't believe that constitutes doing council business over the telephone.

Mayor Jody Soronen agreed, adding it's a matter of courtesy for council members to let the mayor know if they disagree or have concerns about an appointee.

The council also decided it will send letters of acknowledgment to appointment applicants informing them their applications have been received. Thank you letters also will be sent to those who are not appointed.

And as suggested earlier by Vagnozzi, current board members whose terms are about to expire will be sent a letter or be called to be asked whether they wish to be considered for reappointment.


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