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Homeowners fight for quality of life



Homeowners from throughout the city have banded together in the year-old Council of Homeowners Associations in Farmington Hills.

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The year-old Council of Homeowners Associations of Farmington Hills is moving toward maturity, armed with an agenda of hefty issues for 1988.

"We're interested in things that really impact the quality of life in Farmington Hills," council chairman Bruce Doolittle said.

In its first year, the citywide umbrella organization, representing homeowner associations, gained attention for its stands on roads, child day care and zoning issues.

In 1988, council officials promise involvement in solid waste disposal, insurance, traffic, roads (including noise abatement along I-596), planning and zoning, crime, environment and schools.

"The issue of solid waste in 1988 will probably be the most prevalent issue for the homeowners council," said Jack Rajkovich, council vice chairman.

Solid waste is tentatively scheduled for discussion at the council's next meeting May 10.

EFFORTS WILL continue to further develop a working relationship between the homeowners council and Farmington Hills elected officials and administrators.

"I believe we are looked upon with credibility. People realize we are not

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going off half-cocked, shooting from the hip," Doolittle said.

City manager William Costick supports the homeowners council: "It provides a link the city can use. Without that kind of organization, the neighborhoods are involved with themselves and issues that just affect themselves."

In its first year, the homeowners council provided associations with information about city issues, such as changes in the city's master land-use plan.

"I see them as a benefit because you can get a feeling for public reaction from a far larger basis," Mayor Jody Soronen said.

The council succeeds an earlier now-defunct organization that helped ensure the city's incorpora-

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Crime is down slightly in Farmington

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Major crime was down by three percent in Farmington in 1987, showing a "relatively stable" profile compared with years past.

"That seems to follow a trend," said public safety director Frank Lauhoff, who recently completed his annual report on crime in the city of 11,000.

The crime rate "hasn't shown a continual increase" since it leveled off in the early 1980s.

The only increase in major crimes was in larcenies (theft in which there is no break-in), which jumped from 337 in 1986 to 382, an increase of 13 percent. Much of the increase was in larcenies in buildings, while shoplifting crimes declined, the annual statistics said.

Substantial decreases of between 36 and 83 percent were logged in auto theft, aggravated assaults and

rapes. There were no arson fires or murders in the city in 1987.

Numbers of burglaries and robberies were also down, the report said. Residential burglaries decreased 21 percent from the previous year and similar commercial crimes fell 13 percent during the same period.

MANY INCIDENTS in suburban areas such as Farmington are crimes against property, which have risen by 18 percent nationwide during the past 10 years. By comparison, Farmington's property crimes have risen only 6.5 percent, which Lauhoff attributes to the small size of the city, which gives the department better control.

In addition to watching general crime in the city, the department has targeted several areas of emphasis that show in the 1987 statistics.

An emphasis on halting alcohol-related juvenile crime brought an increase in juvenile arrests and other activity this year. Complaints in this area increased by 70 percent.

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City of Farmington crime

CRIME	1986	1987	%
Homicide	0	0	0
Criminal Sexual Conduct	6	1	-83%
Robbery	8	7	-12.5%
Aggravated Assault	14	9	-36%
Burglary	111	91	-18%
Larceny	337	382	+13%
Motor vehicle theft	58	29	-50%
Arson	1	0	-100%
Total	535	519	-3%

Audubon chief works to spread love of nature



Barney Huffman plays with his dog, Happy, in their Farmington Hills home.

By Lorene McClellan
staff writer

Barney Huffman learned to love and respect nature during his boyhood days trout fishing and camping with his father.

He's passing on that love and respect, sharing nature experiences with his son, Christopher, a 7-year-old student at Kenbrook Elementary in Farmington Hills, and his 18-month-old daughter, Amanda.

His top priority as president of the Detroit Audubon Society is to spread that love and respect by promoting an "environmental conscience" throughout southeast Michigan.

Huffman and his wife, Elizabeth, own a not-just-for-summer cottage near Alpena. The couple was backpacking and camping in wilderness areas before he became involved with the Audubon Society.

"But the time for getting out the camera and the binoculars for bird watching and nature hiking is going down as I've gone up to take on more administrative work for the DAS," he said.

"Between trying to get Oakland County residents to realize all they've got here, which is why a lot of them moved here, and trying to get the DAS a permanent home base, I expect it to be a very full term," he added.

THE NATIONAL society's Detroit chapter, based in Royal Oak, is one of the oldest in the country. It has been renting office space for all of its 36 years.

As president of the chapter's 7,000 members, Huffman does not expect to change the world. But he has hopes of bringing a new sense of regionalism to members.

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Planners accused of misleading public

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills resident Jack Joynl believes city planning commissioners have misled residents about density and cluster housing.

"They were trying to say the families aren't as big (in cluster housing), yak, yak . . ." said the Springbrook subdivision resident. "I think it was a smoke screen."

Joynl takes exception to examples of density offered by planning commissioners Philip Arnold and Joanne Smith at a public hearing March 3 on changes in the city's master land-use plan.

Arnold and Smith spoke about differences in the number of people who would live in cluster housing vs. single-family houses.

Smith later acknowledged she made a mathematical mistake in her example, but defended her description of density in terms of population. "I'm sorry, I didn't put the decimal point in the right place," Smith said.

Still, Joynl considers discussion about the number of people in cluster and single-family houses misleading. "Density is the number of dwellings," Joynl said.

BUT ARNOLD denied any attempts to confuse residents at the public hearing. He defended his decision to describe cluster and single-family housing density in terms of people.

"Do buildings make it denser? I

Subdivision	1.8	2.1	2.6	3.8
Natural Cluster	1.8	2.1	2.6	3.8
Cluster	3.1	3.1	4.8	4.8

don't know. Would it make a difference if we built an Empire State Building in the middle of Farmington Hills and we all live in it and all the other land around it is vacant?"

Residents criticized planning commissioners' designation of cluster housing in some areas. Following the public hearing, planning commissioners designated eight of 11 proposed areas for cluster housing.

Clusters suggested fell into two types, including those used as a buffer and to staff off development of multiple housing, commercial or offices, or to accommodate development in areas with difficult land features.

At the March 3 public hearing, Arnold used an example estimating the number of people who would live in cluster housing in those eight areas.

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