

# Waldron Park sounds are not music to all

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She wants the park returned to families. "I don't blame the police for this. I blame the city," Ranesbottom said. She said Farmington Hills police

have been responsive when she has called for help. Police Chief William Dwyer, said he, too, is aware of problems with young adults at the park. "We have never received any calls recently as far as gangs or disorderly kids. How-

ever, it is a hangout. And there is some drinking and some drugs there."

Ranesbottom confirmed police efforts to stem the tide of drug use in the park. BUT THERE are other problems

she wants addressed by the city's parks and recreation division, which she feels pays more attention to residents north of 10 Mile.

Parks officials say they are surprised that complaints are continuing. They also deny favoritism

for park areas and residents north of 10 Mile.

"It was my understanding that we had pretty well eliminated some of the problems," Farmington Hills special services director Dan Potter said, acknowledging receipt of a recent complaint letter from Ranesbottom.

Dennis Fitzgerald, chairman of the city's parks and recreation commission, said, "I know we've addressed needs of parks all over the city. We're working on buying a new park in the south end now. There's no one on the commission who's ever broached that there's a line of demarcation between the north and south."

Dwyer agrees. "If anything, it (Waldron Park) probably gets more attention because we're aware of potential problems there."

Still, Ranesbottom wants specific changes in the park. For starters, she wants the basketball court, which also serves as the park's parking lot, removed permanently or moved to the south side of the park where the never-used ice rink sits.

"My contention is you can't have both," Ranesbottom said, referring to the basketball court and parking lot. "At 4:30 a.m., there's always a lot of cars here. Sunday nights are the gems. The music gets so loud, I can't hear my own TV. I want those gone, or the parking lot moved."

POTTER SAID he is willing to look at alternative sites for the basketball nets. "I told them, though, it wasn't something we would do within the next few weeks. Total removal from the park, however, is beyond what we are looking at," he said.

Fencing, or the lack of it, is another problem. At one time, a chain hung between wooden posts. Those are now gone. A chain with a lock is now used at the entrance of the parking lot. The city's park watch employees lock the chain at dusk. But it doesn't stop kids from entering the park on foot, Ranesbottom said.

"The chain lock took us 13 years to get. Now what we understand is that there's little or no money out of that millage (five-year, 0.5-mill park levy) for the park," Ranesbottom said.

Potter said revenue from the 1986 voter-approved park millage is primarily for development of new parks. Waldron Park is maintained with revenue in the city's park operations budget. That is not to say nothing new can be done at the park, Potter said.

"We'll take a look at the needs at Waldron and we'll take a look at what we can do. But we still aren't sure about what we're doing with the new parks. But we'll take a look at the constructive suggestions made," Potter said.

# New director stresses management

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he's back in the spotlight as the new board president.

Freedman began his commitment to the Farmington Community Center as a representative from Farmington Public Schools. When he left the school district last June, he served as the 20-year-old center's interim director and helped select new director Dorothy Pfaff.

"With my new business, I was considering leaving the board. But I have a commitment to the center. So I took the job," said Freedman, co-owner of the less-than-year-old restaurant, Hot Dawgs and More!, in downtown Farmington.

Freedman said he became interim director during one of the center's worst moments. Veteran director Betty Payne was resigning, and the center was amid financial woes.

But he has hopes and goals for the historic center on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile. "The place can't survive unless we use a busi-

ness approach to management," he said.

THAT'S EXACTLY the approach Pfaff and Moran CPAs, Southfield, recommended in an \$18,000 study commissioned by the board of directors. One of Freedman's priorities is to follow the guidelines recommended in that report.

More secure financing and a new name underlining a new direction for the future are two important issues for Freedman. As he predicted when interim director, the center completed the latest fiscal year, ending in December, with a \$30,000 deficit.

"When I was interim director, I projected a three-year deficit. I would anticipate another deficit but a smaller one. That's progress," Freedman said.

Running the center as a business means there's a need to assess the productivity of each square foot in the century-old house. Freedman and other officials are hoping to

drum up use of the center as a place for business seminars, meetings and conferences, he said.

Though there are attempts to move in new directions to improve the center's financial health, Freedman is cautious about eliminating classes that have long been a mainstay.

"I really don't want to eliminate classes, however, I believe care should be taken in surveying classes to assure a maximum financial return. Yet, we don't want to eliminate classes purely on a dollar basis," FREEDMAN said.

FREEDMAN ALSO plans to look at the center's catering services. "But there's still a question about the kitchen's operation."

Though director Pfaff has placed a greater emphasis this summer on using the center's grounds for programming, Freedman said the house can't be forgotten because there's more winter than summer months in Michigan.

That's why a one-man fund-raising effort by Farmington Hills city councilman Ben Marks has been critical to the house's future. Marks has a \$200,000 goal, of which proceeds will be restricted for capital improvements. The first project is repairing and improving the outdoor amphitheater, which is helping put the center on the cultural activities map.

"Ben's work will certainly eliminate our need to touch the Angel Fund, of which there isn't much money left," Freedman said. The fund has been used in the past year

to help offset the operating budget deficit, according to Pfaff.

A name change has become a growing issue because of the board's concern that residents and patrons mistakenly consider the center to be financed by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

But at the annual meeting in May, the name Longacre House Community Cultural Center Farmington Hills-Farmington, was rejected by the membership. "There seemed to be so much concern on behalf of the volunteers — and the volunteers are an important part of the center — they felt that because of the traditions of the place, the name shouldn't be changed."

MANY FEEL the current name implies the center serves only Farmington. And there's a need to clarify what the center is and whom it serves, Freedman said.

A new name should show the community center to be a cultural arts center, and one that serves not only Farmington and Farmington Hills, but residents from other communities who are interested in participating.

"Tradition is strong here but there's a need for change. We have to expand our sphere of service. We want people. If we're going to be financially successful, we have to apply to more than Farmington and Farmington Hills."

"I feel there is a future for the center. But you can't stick your head in the sand and think the problems are going to go away. You have to face them."

# Center fund-raiser continues

It's not too late to help the Farmington Community Center find financial health.

The annual fund-raiser that began in May is still going strong. "We're pleased with the fund-raiser. People are responding nicely," said executive director Dorothy Pfaff.

Following the mailing of 26,000 requests for financial help in early May, center officials are involved in a telemarketing campaign reminding past users and donors of the \$100,000 fund-raiser. Within a month, area corporations will

receive letters and personal visits asking for financial commitments, Pfaff said.

Proceeds will be used for the center's operating costs. The 20-year-old center is a non-profit organization, financially independent of the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills. It relies on residents, patrons and businesses for financial support.

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