

# 2 defend Hills zone change

By Casey Hana  
staff writer

Two Farmington Hills planning commissioners in favor of rezoning land for an expanded Muirwood Square shopping center defended that development and their city, and made a few verbal attacks on neighboring Farmington Thursday.

They also opened some old wounds by raising the issue of past annexation and consolidation efforts between Farmington and Farmington Hills — old issues from the 1950s and 1970s when Farmington Hills was still a township.

Their comments followed statements from Farmington city boards opposing the proposed development because of concerns that it will cause a deteriorating downtown one mile away.

"I have to think about my city first," commissioner and longtime resident Joanne Smith said.

"I don't want a commercial area in my city to become what the (Farmington) Downtown (Development) Authority says they are trying to cure, belatedly. I applaud what has been done.



BOB SKLAR

Farmington Hills Planning Commission vice chairwoman Joanne Smith (right) offers her views on downtown Farmington as planning commissioner Jack Joynt listens Thursday night.

"But if it's a little bit late and Farmington Hills has grown up around you . . ." she said, "understand, that's what happened when we didn't become one big city."

SMITH ALSO disagreed with others' assessment that downtown Farmington is the heart, or center area, of both cities.

"I think it's stretching it to say 'this is our downtown,'" she said. "A lot of people north of 12 Mile may have never been to downtown Farmington. You can't really call it 'our downtown.'"

Other city officials and administrators have said they consider Farmington's downtown the heart of both municipalities.

Planning commissioner Lawrence

Lichtman echoed Smith's sentiments, and said he questioned whether Farmington's concerns "should be a significant point in our considerations. I find it hard to believe this development would wreak havoc on the downtown or the city."

"I think the city of Farmington and downtown is going to prosper regardless of what we do here."

LICHTMAN ALSO raised the issue of city boundaries, saying he felt the two cities "should be good neighbors," but weren't always.

"One of the reasons we became Farmington Hills was because Farmington was annexing part of the township. So much for being good neighbors," he said.

# Planners oppose Muirwood rezoning

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Don Hillier, owner of the IGA store at 10 Mile and Orchard Lake, said: "Getting back to the pie, there's only so many pieces. When you keep cutting it and cutting it and cutting it, someone hurts."

REPRESENTATIVES of the Muirwood project said Bertak would spend about \$10 million to upgrade the center, which would include costs of:

- demolishing 80 percent, or 30,000 square feet, of the center's upper level.
- leaving 21,000 square feet of

ready existing buildings.

- building 84,000 square feet of new retail space, half of which will be a supermarket.

- relocating current tenants in the Muirwood Center.

The expansion would be built to the west, on a 12-acre site, but would only use six acres that would abut the current center. The other land would be kept in its natural state, or possibly be used for a recreation center for the Muirwood Apartments at a future date, said Leonard Sigal, of Farmington Hills-based Sigal/Tuomaala Associates, architect for the project.

# 9 arraignments await

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state parole board, the court spokesman said.

Oakland County investigators linked Szeman — an Ohio trash hauling company salesman — to several local attacks through fingerprints found on a Farmington Hills victim's wallet, blood-urine samples and personal property found in his possession that belonged to some of the victims.

The wallet, a purse, credit cards and undergarments belonging to a Farmington Hills victim were found April 2 in a dumpster in Westlake, Ohio, 3 1/2 miles from Szeman's Rocky River township. Szeman had just moved to Rocky River from a rented room on Heather Heath in West Bloomfield, where he lived for about two years. The last Oakland County victim was raped March 31, 1988, at her Farmington Hills home.

A Defiance, Ohio, native, who once held hourly jobs in Troy and Southfield, Szeman is charged with 49 criminal counts in Oakland County, including 36 counts of criminal sexual conduct and nine counts of armed robbery. He faces 24 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Szeman is charged in 10 attacks from April 1987 and March 1988: three rapes each in Farmington Hills and Bloomfield Township, an independence Township rape, a rape and an attempted rape in Birmingham and an armed robbery in West Bloomfield.

Victims ranged in age from 12-61. They included two women raped in the same Bloomfield Township house two weeks apart, two Farmington Hills sisters and a 12-year-old Bloomfield Township baby sister. Many were assaulted by knife-point.

WHEN SZEMAN returns to Michigan, nine arraignments and preliminary examinations will be scheduled in 48th District Court in Bloomfield Township, 47th District Court in Farmington and 52nd-Second Division District Court in Clarkston, Slevin said.

"We're not sure which case will go first or when it will go," said Slevin, who will handle the cases through district courts and Oakland County Circuit Court.

Slevin said he would not guess whether Szeman will plead guilty as he did in Ohio or plead not guilty and go for trial. "I cannot comment on that. We can't comment on the strength of evidence," Slevin said. In Michigan, conviction of first-de-

*'I want to apologize for all the hurt I've caused the victim and others.'*

— Steven A. Szeman Jr.  
convicted Ohio rapist

gree criminal sexual conduct brings a penalty of up to life in prison. Slevin confirmed that former Oakland County prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson will prosecute one of the nine cases. Investigators may consolidate the rapes of two Farmington Hills sisters in the same house into one case, for a total of nine cases, Slevin said. Oakland County prosecutor Rich-

ard Thompson said he intends to seek court approval to appoint Patterson a special assistant prosecutor to try one of the cases.

Now in private legal practice in Birmingham, Patterson wants to prosecute the first Oakland County case at no charge to the county because the 10 attacks and Szeman's arrest took place while he was prosecutor.

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# How they voted

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• Lawrence Lichtman: "Frankly, I question whether that (Farmington's opposition) should be a significant point in our consideration."

Voting "no":  
• John Traflet: "There are problems with sight distance on Grand River . . . traffic and a change in the master plan I don't favor."

• Mary Avery: "This would go a long way to changing the character of the area around there. It's more than I want to go along with."

• Jon Grant: "I do think a decline in the downtown area would have an impact on the city of Farmington Hills and property values. Grand River and Halsted is a nightmare. This would have an impact there as well."

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Detroit Institute of Art: A Festival of Spring Exhibit includes 24 original pieces of framed artwork...the finalists from the spring competition. Posters of the winning entry "Almost Spring" by Kathleen Thompson will be available for sale. Store for the Home.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23**  
7 p.m. Clairewood Spring/Summer Fashion Seminar. R.S.V.P. 644-6900, ext. 583.  
7 p.m. Bridal Seminar: "How to Plan a Perfect Wedding" R.S.V.P. 644-6900, ext. 554.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25**  
1 to 3 p.m. Meet Kathleen Thompson, winning artist of the Detroit Institute of Art: A Festival of Spring competition. She will autograph your copy of her poster "Almost Spring".

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1 & THURSDAY, MARCH 2**  
10 to 5 p.m. Oscar de la Renta Spring Collection Show. Informal modeling in our Designer Salon.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 2**  
7 p.m. Dresses/Suits/Coats Fashion Show, Coat Salon. R.S.V.P. 644-6900, ext. 591.

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