

Freshman lawmaker learns the ropes, 1B



Basketball all-area, 1D

Smoking stops cold at local hospital, 3A

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A penny saved by Ole Toll Shell owner Guy Placido will be a penny earned for the gazebo-pergola project in downtown Farmington.

The owner of the Shell station at 37375 Grand River, at Halsted, will donate one penny for every gallon of gas bought at his station during April and May.

The Gazebo-Pergola Fund Committee intends to wrap up the rest of its campaign to raise \$40,000 by mid-April. So far, \$27,000 has been raised.

The group plans for early summer construction of a gazebo and seating area on a city-owned parcel on the north side of Grand River, between the Village Commons shopping center and the Farmington Place Apartments.

COMMUTER routes. About 60 percent of the traffic on 14 and 13 Mile through Farmington Hills during the morning rush originates from west of Haggerty — in Walled Lake, Novi and Commerce, reports city manager William Costick.

QUOTE of the week

"I'd like to live and work in a safe place, not having police around me to make sure I behaved well. And I'd like to be able to raise my children like human beings instead of like animals."

— 32-year-old Salvadoran refugee.

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The CLASSIFIEDS
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Headlee carries bond fight to Troy

Group contends district illegally issued bonds

By Casey Hens staff writer

The Taxpayers United for the Michigan Constitution is using a legal opinion given to Farmington schools to fight what it claims is illegal activity by the Troy district.

A spokesman for the group denies the group originally planned to use the opinion in this manner, although Farmington school officials believed that might happen.

A spokesman for the Farmington district also said he believed the Troy and Farmington situations are "two different issues."

Led by Farmington Hills businessman Richard Headlee, Taxpayers United contends Troy schools illegally issued \$32 million in school construction bonds it would repay with operating millage. The Troy school board issued the bonds last fall to build a new high school after voters twice turned down bond issues.

Because of this action, a recall election for six Troy school board members is slated for May 9 and Taxpayers United has sued to stop the district from spending any of the money from the bond sale.

After requesting the Farmington district's legal opinion last month, a spokesman from Headlee's company, Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America, denied it was requested for use in the Troy fight. Patrick Anderson said such allegations were "news to me."

BUT IN a Taxpayers United statement this week, the Sept. 9, 1988 legal opinion to Farmington Public Schools from attorney Kingsley Colton was quoted extensively. It stated,

in part, that: "in our opinion, a school board may not designate such funds for the construction of a school building."

Bill McMaster, who handles publicity for Alexander Hamilton and Taxpayers United, reiterated this week that there were initially no plans to use the Farmington legal opinion in the Troy lawsuit.

"It was not our intent," McMaster said. When Headlee attended a fall Farmington Board of Education meeting about the district's first bond attempt, "it was clear there was such a document," he added. "Once we got our hands on it, it was interesting to contrast what (the Farmington school attorney) said

with what another attorney apparently advised Troy."

But Farmington Deputy Superintendent Michael Flanagan said he considered the two issues to be separate. Farmington's opinion was requested to clarify that the district could not use its fund equity money; in Troy the question is whether they can use future millage to pay off a bond debt.

"We were fearful that Alexander Hamilton would use our opinion against Troy," Flanagan added. "Apparently they've cited it. Our worst fears have come true."

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Pastor hears call for help

By Susan Buck staff writer

The Rev. Jim Wright, pastor of St. Alexander's Catholic Church parish, Farmington Hills, heard the call.

"Are you the parish that gives away vans?" asked Tim McCabe, executive director of the Detroit/Windsor Refugee Coalition in a telephone call to Wright. The coalition is a downtown Detroit group that helps refugees legally enter Canada and refers others to agencies.

McCabe had the right number.

In 1985, the generosity of St. Al's parishioners resulted in the purchase of a \$14,000 van for the Sunshine Montessori School, located in the "shadows of Tiger Stadium," as Wright says.

School officials were so delighted that they painted a sign on the side of the van, which continues to inform motorists and passersby that the donors were the people of St. Al's.



The Rev. Jim Wright, pastor of St. Alexander's Church in Farmington Hills, is organizing a fund-raising drive to help buy the Detroit/Windsor Refugee Coalition a new van.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

A 32-year-old refugee from the city of San Salvador in El Salvador is seeking legal entry into Canada. He agreed to be interviewed and photographed but would not provide his name. He left behind a wife and young son.

Now Wright is back on the fund-raising trail. Parishioners have raised \$12,000 so far toward purchase of a 1989 van, which is expected to cost \$15,000-\$17,000.

"We don't want a used van," said Wright. "People don't buy a van to play with, they buy it to use it and they use it hard. We want one with a warranty. We also want one with a dealer hitch because lots of times, Tim is moving furniture around."

Donations can be sent to St. Alexander's, 27835 Shlawasse, Farmington Hills, 48024 (phone 474-5748).

Checks should be made out to Detroit/Windsor Refugee Coalition. The church's parishioners come from Farmington and Farmington Hills, Southfield, Birmingham, W. Bloomfield, Troy, Redford and Livonia.

THE PRIEST of good causes is at it again.

DWRC booklet states that the original mission of the coalition was defined by people's concern for Central American refugees. "These people

who had already experienced violence in their home countries, were being denied political asylum in the U.S., being characterized as economic immigrants as opposed to those in imminent danger."

The coalition requires that refugees fall under the definition of a refugee according to the U.S. Convention of 1967: that they be indigent and face repression or death if deported.

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Torture, political corruption are way of life, refugee says

By Susan Buck staff writer

"The death squads do the dirty work of the military, going to people's houses in the middle of the night, yanking the people out of their homes like dogs and taking them out of town."

"The next morning, the people are found, tortured, sometimes

with blankets or bags over their head, or all tied up — sometimes for doing no more than demanding human rights or basic civil rights."

"I'd like to live and work in a safe place, not having police around me to make sure I behaved well. And I'd like to be able to raise my children like human beings instead of like animals."

"My 24-year-old son died in the earthquake of 1986. After the earthquake, our government received millions of dollars from other countries. But I didn't receive a penny of it. It's evidence of the corruption in our country."

Please turn to Page 2

Attorney apologizes in tree controversy

By Joanne Mallazowski staff writer

Farmington Hills city attorney Harold Larson apologized Monday for problems he caused the city council because of his controversial decision to cut down trees on his vacant acreage on 12 Mile, east of Halsted, shortly before the new tree ordinance became effective.

"I'm here to tonight to express our apology and deep regret in that regard," said Larson, who appeared at the council meeting with his wife,

Jenet. "I think it's time this issue, after many weeks, be put to rest."

A letter expressing the council's displeasure with Larson's tree cutting was never written by Mayor Terry Sever, as originally planned. Sever said he decided not to write the letter when Larson requested to speak to the council.

"The consensus was that we got an apology, it's out in the open and enough said," Sever said Tuesday morning.

Halsted resident Bernard Ludwig, who last week challenged Larson's

explanation of the tree cutting on his six acres, said Tuesday he was satisfied with Larson's Monday night comments.

"It's not what the mayor said he would do," Ludwig said, referring to the expected letter to Larson. "But the speech Larson made was an apology to the city. That's sufficient. I think matters should be put to rest."

LARSON TOLD the council he recognized that his decision to cut trees on his land was not greeted fa-

vorably by others, including some council members and neighbors.

The city attorney said he wouldn't have proceeded if he had known the "tension and criticism" it would cause. "The suggestion we had some evil intent, no regard for right or wrong, no regard for this community, that's just not true," he added.

In late February, Sever said he was satisfied with Larson's written explanation to the city council about the tree cuttings. Sever said he didn't feel Larson ravaged the land in violation of the new ordinance protect-

ing the city's remaining trees.

But Ludwig resurrected the issue last week. The 15-year-resident disagrees with Larson's contention that he removed only 18 landmark (notable by size, species or form), which were according to the city attorney, entering "the late portion of their life cycle because they were stressed or dying as evidenced by the cores."

Ludwig, whose property abuts Larson's acreage, said the trees were not diseased, decaying or dy-

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Marks breaks council impasse

By Joanne Mallazowski staff writer

In an ironic twist, Farmington Hills City Councilman Ben Marks broke a deadlock between two candidates for a vacant council seat Monday night, nominating Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman Paul Sowerby, who last year called for Marks' resignation.

Sowerby was unanimously appointed on the fifth ballot, after four ballots left a deadlock between Lawrence Lichtman and Jonathan Grant, both planning commissioners. Sowerby will take the seat left open by Joe Alkateeb, who resigned last month.

"I'm big enough to understand he'll be a good council member," Marks said Tuesday. "I don't hold any grudges."

In a letter to the city council last year, Sowerby criticized Marks for bouncing checks to pay a long-overdue sewer line bid. Sowerby called for Marks' resignation "not in disgrace . . . but rather in the sense of what is right."

"I can't see any break in the armor," Marks said as he nominated Sowerby, who is on vacation this week and unavailable for comment.

In the first four ballots, council members Jean Fox, Jody Soronen and Terry Sever supported Grant. Council members Marks, Aldo Vagnozzi and Philip Arnold supported Lichtman.

Shortly before he resigned, Alkateeb criticized Soronen for supporting Grant in the December appointment process to fill former Councilwoman Jan Dolan's seat. Soronen is the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce executive director and Grant is chamber president.

COUNCIL MEMBERS Arnold, Fox, Marks and Soronen changed their minds and cast their votes for Sowerby. As Vagnozzi's turn approached — and with the majority of votes already cast for Sowerby — he said, "It doesn't matter." Vagnozzi then made a motion to appoint Sowerby unanimously.

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