

Bond fight moves to Troy

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In correspondence last week, Headlee asked the Troy school superintendent to release that district's legal opinion and compared the positions of the two districts, saying "obviously your school board received a conflicting opinion to the one received by the Farmington Hills (sic) school board."

"We do not believe that school districts taking 180 degree differing positions on this matter can both be correct."

Ironically, Headlee first raised the issue of using operating money for capital building projects at the meeting he attended last fall, suggesting to Farmington school officials that they use funds currently in the budget. He told trustees to "avoid debt like the plague" and use surplus operating money and dollars from a capital fund to build the new school.

Headlee eventually backed a bond issue for the new school, when trustees

opted to ask voters only for new elementary school money, and not for additional funds for building renovations. After defeating a larger bond issue last fall, voters approved a \$7.3 million issue in January.

THROUGHOUT THE bond campaign, Farmington school officials stressed they would not use operating money to build the new school based on the legal opinion which backed this position.

Alexander Hamilton representatives requested that written legal opinion in February, eventually filing a Freedom of Information Request to get the information. The school board approved releasing the document March 21, after the request was denied by administration.

The opinion, from the Birmingham firm of Denison, Bartush and Cotton, states that: "In our opinion, a common sense interpretation of 'school operating expenses' excludes expenditures for new school construction."

Officials deny alterations

The deputy superintendent of Farmington schools has denied that a legal opinion addressed to him was in any way altered, responding to a challenge from those who had requested and received copies of the report.

"We didn't change anything," said Michael Flanagan. "It's absurd, we don't lie. We've always had an opinion as we said we had."

In personally viewing the original of the document Tuesday, a reporter from the Observer could see no sign of any alterations. The two-page letter was printed on manilla-colored paper. The copies handed out to the

public had been reduced on a copy machine to fit onto one page.

In a letter sent to school board president Jack Cotton, representatives from Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of Farmington Hills said they believed the date on the Farmington legal opinion was altered. Spokesman Bill McMaster said they are awaiting a response from the district.

Flanagan said since the letter was addressed to board president Cotton, the "earliest opportunity to respond would be Tuesday" at the regular board meeting.

struction.

"Because the school code does not specifically authorize the use of operating funds for new building construction, while it does specifically

authorize school construction with other types of financing, it is our opinion that it would be improper to designate operating funds for that purpose."

Bids awarded for construction

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Bids for the second phase of the downtown Farmington redevelopment project have been awarded for work along the Farmington Road corridor.

Similar to the first phase, the project involves replacement of sidewalks, installation of new pedestrian lighting and new trees. It is being coordinated through Farmington Downtown Development Authority.

Peter A. Basile and Sons of Livonia was the lowest of five bidders for general contracting work at \$122,184. Prices ranged up to

\$187,150. Another bid of \$101,635, from Imperial Blacktop of Dearborn was not accepted by the DDA board, because it was submitted late.

Basile has done similar streetscape work in Lincoln Park, Northville, Garden City, Ann Arbor and Dearborn Heights among others. "My experiences with them have been very good," said city planner Christopher Wzacy. "I have no qualms about recommending them."

The 2001 Nursery and Garden Center of Flat Rock won the landscaping contract with the low bid of \$4,531.25. There were four bidders, with prices ranging up to \$7,000. The company also did

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landscaping work in the project's first phase.

The DDA advertised in four trade journals and in the Observer. Twenty-seven companies picked up specifications for the project. DDA director

Wendy Strip Sittsamer said part of the contract stipulates that work on the second phase be completed by June 30, so it will not conflict with the mid-summer Farmington/Farmington Hills Founders Festival.

Attorney apologizes in tree controversy

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ing. Trees in that condition were left behind by logger R.D. Woods of Brighton, who cut the trees for the city attorney.

Larson, however, said he stands by his letter of explanation and that the

trees cut were not in the best of health.

Though Larson cut the trees about one week before the new tree ordinance became effective Feb. 13, the city attorney said he believes he followed the spirit of the regulations,

drafted by his law firm.

A COUPLE OF residents tried to put the tree cutting issue in perspective. Criticizing the council's use of the phrase "public perception,"

Stockton resident Rosa Flum said: "The trees were cut, that's not a perception. The ordinance was written in his law firm. That's not a perception. That's a reality."

Marks breaks impasse between 2 candidates

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A 16-year-resident, Sowerby was among 11 candidates seeking to fill the vacancy left by Alkateeb's Feb. 20 resignation.

"It was really a toss-up between a couple individuals," Mayor Terry Sever said. Candidates were publicly interviewed Monday, March 20. Councilman Arnold personally interviewed all the candidates except George Sarkisian.

"It's much more difficult up here than out there," Arnold said, referring to the difficulty in selecting an appointee.

Arnold said he was looking for an appointee who is an independent thinker, who seeks out and analyzes facts to reach a reasonable conclusion, is a team player, and who can participate in establishing policy as a group while allowing city administrators to carry out policy.

Sowerby will be sworn in sometime before the next scheduled meeting at 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 10. The council will meet at 6 p.m. before that meeting to review the 1989-90 budget.

SOEWBY WILL serve in Alkateeb's seat only until the November city council election. A 1985 amendment to the city charter requires the new appointee to run for election to fill the remaining two years of Alkateeb's four-year term. Alkateeb was re-elected in November 1987.

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

— Ben Marks

In the November election, voters will cast ballots in two city council races. One race will be to fill Alkateeb's two remaining years. The second will be for the regular council terms expiring this year. Seats held by Vagnozzi, Marks, Sorenson and Arnold, who was appointed in December to fill Dolan's term, all expire this year.

Candidates interested in seeking election in November may run in only one of the two races.

In addition to Sowerby, Lichtman and Grant, candidates included Martin Krohn, vice chairman for the Council of Homeowners Associations of Farmington Hills; Richard Corey, board of zoning appeals member; Vernon Klepinski, council watcher; Mary Avery, planning commissioner; George Sarkisian, a Ford Motor Co. layout technician; Albert Rosen, a Detroit Public Schools English department head; H. Frank Janin, a chiropractor; and Larry Basbam, owner of two Farmington Hills businesses.

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