

# Faxon, Marks at odds over day care zoning

By Joanne Mallarzewski  
staff writer

State Sen. Jack Faxon isn't daunted by growing opposition to his proposed in-home child day care regulations overriding local zoning controls.

"I'm still hopeful," the Farmington Hills resident said. "A lot of that alarmist stuff is coming from here (Farmington Hills)." Farmington Hills city councilman Ben Marks is leading the fight against Faxon-sponsored Senate bill 177, which applies to cities and villages.

The councilman called the municipal representation against the proposed regulations a success because the bill was not reported out of committee for discussion before the full Senate. The municipal representation took place at a Senate committee hearing in late April.

"I believe we had a tremendous impact," said Marks, who spoke at the hearing. "I

believe we gave them a brand-new dimension to look at."

Faxon doesn't think failure awaits him because the bill remains in committee.

"They just decided not to take it up. The chairman (Sen. Fred Dillingham, R-Powdermill) wanted everyone to be heard."

SB 177 is part of a package of bills overriding local zoning controls and allowing in-home child day care in residential areas. Companion bills applying to townships and counties, which passed last year, are now in effect. The predecessor of SB 177 lost by one vote in the state House in December.

"OUR POSITION illustrated that local government can do a better job on an individual basis than the state, pertinent to their specific needs," Marks said.

Troy, Livonia, Novi, Farmington, Birmingham, Plymouth and Southfield are opposing the bill.

Farmington Hills city councilwoman

Jody Soronen, a member of the Michigan Municipal League's legislative committee, plans to take the bill before her committee May 19 for discussion. A position may or may not be taken, she said.

MANY MUNICIPALITIES are opposed to the bill because they feel it usurps local authority. Opponents say they aren't against child day care in residential areas, but prefer individual municipalities to address the issue rather than the state establishing regulations.

But Faxon said the state must step in because many municipalities continue to make life difficult for in-home child day care providers, who protect themselves by not getting a state license.

"The whole purpose is to upgrade the professional standards for the care of children," Faxon said. "Local governments may be satisfied they have established an environment that gets people to come for-

ward (for licensing). But we don't see that."

The Internal Revenue Service, not local government, is why many providers don't get licenses, Marks said.

"They don't want to declare their income," he said.

MANY CITIES, including Farmington Hills, allow child day care in neighborhoods for a maximum six children. The larger, group homes for a maximum 12 children, are allowed in Farmington Hills on major or secondary roads, not in neighborhoods.

Faxon said the bill would enhance rather than take away local authority. The bill would allow local governments to inspect day care homes for compliance with local ordinances as long as ordinances are not more restrictive than state regulations, he said.

"The enhancement angle is very shallow. It's a sham," Marks said. "We can police the

homes. It's obvious the state and local governments don't have enough money to put inspectors out there. But when someone gets a license, the homes are checked by our fire department (for example)."

A major focus of the battle is the larger group homes for a maximum 12 children, which Farmington Hills allows on major roads. The homes also would be regulated under Faxon's bill. The larger homes for a maximum 12 children would require a permit if they are less than 1,500 feet away from other similar homes and facilities, such as a foster care home.

Under Faxon's bill, group day care homes also would have to conform to local fencing, off-street parking and sign regulations. And they would be permitted to operate only 10 hours in a 24-hour period. The smaller homes for a maximum six children, which Faxon said are the most predominant, would not require a permit.

## Dispatcher cited for helping link suspect to recent murder

Farmington Hills dispatcher Carol Kohls McNamara is the police department's employee of the month for May.

The department's advisory planning committee selected Kohls McNamara for her "care, concern, extra attention and dedication to duty," police Chief William Dwyer said.

In particular, Kohls McNamara was chosen for the honor because of her involvement with calls regarding the March drowning of 17-year-old Mercy High School student Kristina Marie Fracchia of Farmington Hills in Orchard Lake. Anthony Jo-

seph Bonelli, 17, of Farmington Hills, faces a first-degree murder charge in connection with her death.

On March 16, Kohls McNamara received a call from a Farmington Hills resident, expressing concern about a car parked near his residence. The car contained a woman's purse; a key was in the ignition.

At the time, there were no patrol cars available to investigate the car. But the resident later told Kohls McNamara the abandoned car was picked up by two men driving a Ford Escort.

Based on information from the resident, Kohls McNamara called the car's owner and left a message

about the car on the owner's answering machine.

About four hours later, Kohls McNamara received a phone call reporting that Fracchia was missing. The dispatcher recalled previous information linking the abandoned car and the missing teenager.

"The information became critical after it was determined the next day that this person (Fracchia) had been murdered and the suspect was one of the two who picked up the victim's car, that was temporarily abandoned," police said.

Information provided by Kohls McNamara was "important to corroborate the suspect's confession," police said.



RANDY HORST/staff photographer

Dispatcher Carol Kohls McNamara is the Farmington Hills Police Department's Employee of the Month for May.

## Mail backs up in Washington

Mail has been backing up in the U.S. House mailroom. The House Postmaster said an eight- or nine-day delay should be anticipated.

"I am making every effort to respond to constituent letters on the day they are received. However, mountains of mail wait in the basement of my building undelivered," said U.S. Rep. William Broomfield, R-Birmingham, who represents the Farmington area.

The reason given for this delay stems from a record number of constituent letters, which have flooded the congressional mail room. Over 300 million pieces of mail this year alone have broken all previous records.

"Knowing the views of constituents is one of the most important tasks any congressional representative faces," Broomfield said.

"Anyone who wishes to avoid the delay in Washington is welcome to contact my district office in Birmingham (300 Park Road, Suite 340, Birmingham 48009-3401, Phone 642-3600)."

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## Farmington High alumni picnic nears

In celebration of the centennial of its first graduating class, Farmington High is sponsoring a family picnic with entertainment and events for all past and present students, teachers, administrators and support employees.

The picnic is planned for 1-5 p.m. Sunday, May 21, at the Farmington High football field, 32000 Shiawassee, between Orchard Lake Road and Power.

Relay races, badminton, croquet, tennis, softball, volleyball, basketball and horseshoes are planned. For the really active, there will be a tug-of-war. For the not-so-active, there will be musical entertainment and an antique car show.

**WHEN ATTENDING the picnic,** organizers suggest a few ways you

can help make this a memorable event:

- check the file of senior graduation pictures to make sure your class and your yearbook are in the collection.
- talk about your days at Farmington High with some of the local historians.
- donate an item to be included in the time capsule that will be buried in the summer. This sealable capsule, provided by the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington, still has a little room; plans are to open it in the year 2030.
- pack your lunch and come to the picnic where admission is free, or come without a lunch and splurge on a hot dog and pop at turn-of-the-century prices. No alcoholic beverages will be allowed.
- collect a commemorative souvenir. Request a "centennial certi-

cate," being distributed on a first come, first served basis. Although the 1918 and 1988 schools are long gone, you will be able to buy a brick from the 1953 school, which will come from the school's smokestack, slated for demolition as part of the school's ongoing building improvement project.

Plans detailing the new media center and other building changes will be on display at the picnic. Tours will be available for those who would like to see what the current school looks like.

Most of all, come to the picnic meet your old teachers and classmates.

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