

Candidates share views on IRO rezoning bid

By Norman Flack
staff writer

Farmington Hills City Council candidates have mixed feelings about the proposed rezoning of 14.5 acres near Drake and Grand River from office service district to industrial-research-office district.

They shared their views at a Farmington Democratic Club-sponsored candidates night in the city council chambers Sept. 27.

The acreage is on the east side of Drake, north of Grand River, south of Hillside Estates Condominiums and north of Indopex Circle.

Some residents in the area fear rezoning may pose a toxic threat to their neighborhood by allowing research laboratories and other businesses that might bring toxic chemicals or waste.

Up to 100 houses could settle in the IRO zone sought by developer Melvin Kalkas. He and the city's Estates board maintain the city has adequate controls to regulate the

kinds of businesses that locate there. On Sept. 25, the city council imposed a temporary moratorium on IRO rezonings until an ad hoc committee on toxic and hazardous materials completes its study next year.

ARTHUR GETZ, a resident on Charter Crest in Independence Commons, asked the candidates to take a stand on the proposed rezoning. He said "200 angry residents" have attended council meetings but have received little support in their quest to prevent it.

Ten candidates are seeking four regular council terms: incumbents Ben Marks, Aldo Vagnozzi and Philip Arnold and challengers Jonathan Grant, Vernon Kieplinski, Lawrence Lichtman, Ronald Oliverio, Albert Rosen, Bettye Stines and George Sarkisian. Stines did not attend the candidates night because of a death in her family.

The other candidates are seeking a special term to fill the remaining two years of former councilman Joe

Alkateeb's four-year term: incumbent Paul Sowerby and challengers Nancy Bates and Herbert Lines. Councilman Arnold said the "200 angry residents" attended the city council meetings based on a letter sent to them by a homeowner, also a candidate, who misinterpreted the facts on the issue.

"It (the letter) was nothing more than crying fire in a crowded theater," Arnold said. "The use of the land proposed has the potential of having far less impact on the neighbors, and the possible uses are limited."

Oliverio, Independence Commons Homeowners Association president, acknowledged he was the candidate who sent the letter. He said he strongly opposes the IRO rezoning bid.

"I feel that certain members of the city council and the developer tried to pull a sleazy bid of business on us as homeowners," Oliverio said. "It is clearly against our best interests and it's outrageous that we have

to defend ourselves against something like this."

ROSEN QUOTED William Shakespeare, saying, "There is something rotten in the state of Denmark."

Continuing, he said: "The ethical point of view is more important than the legal point of view."

Vagnozzi has strongly opposed the rezoning bid. "It is a special interest change in zoning to benefit Mr. Kalkas," Vagnozzi said.

"The planning commission considered this IRO matter before the city council did, and I can assure you there is nothing sleazy or underhanded about it," said Lichtman, a planning commissioner since January.

"I would ask that those owners who are concerned about the issue find out all the facts before they form an opinion on the issue."

Sowerby, appointed in March to replace Alkateeb after he resigned, said, "I weighed the issue and in my opinion and with my zoning experi-

ence, I felt the proposed IRO was appropriate for that site."

"You don't always vote the way the residents think you ought to on a given issue," Sowerby said. "You have to look at the entire community."

"There are times when the council must act contrary to the desires of one group, maintaining that they are serving the interest of the city as a whole," Grant said. "This however, is not the case. There is alternative zoning."

Kieplinski said, "I don't believe anyone would want something like that in their own back yard. I wouldn't vote for something like that."

Sarkisian agreed that the city council should listen to the concerns of the residents.

"Toxic waste is a real problem," Sarkisian said. "I work for Ford Motor Co. and I deal with it everyday. I think the proposed rezoning decision belongs to the residents."

MARKS VOTED against the moratorium and said the planning commission offered enough information to convince him the IRO district would not put neighbors at risk of toxic substances.

"I felt the impact of the proposed zoning of what will go in there is far less threatening than what could go in there," Marks said.

Bates said she thought "the planning commission did an excellent job" studying the issue. "However, they don't have the job to factor in the human element. That's the responsibility of the city council," she said.

"I believe the people came before our council. I don't think they were hysterical. I don't think they were paranoid. I think they have legitimate concerns and are entitled to answers to their questions before anything happens to that property."

Liner said: "Rather than get involved, we should try to avoid any affiliation with it."

Election day is Tuesday, Nov. 7.

2 Farmington Hills men nabbed in drug sweep

Two Farmington Hills men are among 20 people arrested in a five-county sweep directed at street-level drug dealers and users.

"The crackdown came at the request of local police chiefs," said Trooper Tom Cremonette of the Michigan State Police post in Brighton. He coordinates the 10-officer Livingston County Drug Task Force, which organized the sweep.

Arrested Sept. 27 before District Judge Frank DeVero of Howell, Ellis Hendrickson, 35, and John Carl Holzhaus, 27, both of Farmington Hills, stood mute to one count of possessing cocaine under 25 grams.

DeVero entered not-guilty pleas on their behalf and released them on \$5,000 personal bond, pending a preliminary exam in 53rd District Court, Howell. They face up to four years in prison if convicted.

The charges stem from earlier in September when a Green Oak Township officer, responding to a trespassing complaint, found them snorting cocaine in a parked vehicle, Cremonette said.

ARMED WITH an arrest warrant issued by the 53rd District Court, Farmington Hills detective Patrick Monti, assisted by officers Charles

Rozum and Dan Luoma, arrested the Farmington Hills men the morning of Sept. 27.

After their arrest, Monti, Farmington Hills' chief narcotics enforcement officer, turned them over to the Livingston County Drug Task Force.

Monti was one of 70 officers in Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, Livingston and Shiawassee counties who took part in the September sweep. Many of the arrests took place Sept. 27-28.

Arrests resulted from search warrants and drug purchases in addition to patrol investigations, Cremonette said.

IN ONE of the biggest seizures, officers executing a search warrant took 200,000 units of PCP from the Brighton home of Michael Denby, 49, formerly of Farmington Hills, Cremonette said.

Denby is being held in the Livingston County Jail in lieu of \$200,000 cash or surety bond following his arraignment in 53rd District Court. He pleaded not guilty to possession, with intent to deliver, PCP. Conviction

would bring a penalty of up to seven years in prison.

In all, the task force seized \$14,000 in cash, a home in Howell

and a home in Brighton, 10 cars,

guns, 25 pounds of marijuana, several ounces of crack and powder cocaine, 200 hits of LSD, pharmaceuti-

cals, hashish and narcotics paraphernalia.

"We found just about every street drug but heroin," Cremonette said.

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