

Parks board chief draws line on Spicer issue

By Joanne Maliszowski
staff writer

The head of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission doesn't want the city's historic experts or city manager to interfere in the furnishing of the 64-year-old Elcanor Spicer Estate House in Heritage Park.

"They (historic district commissioners) have not been asked by this commission," said parks and recreation chairman Dennis Fitzgerald.

City manager William Costick suggested last week that he and the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission work with parks and recreation commissioners to develop a budget to furnish the Spicer house.

He also suggested that historic experts could help plan furnishings that are functional for the future visitors center, yet in character with the historic style of the estate house.

"I think it's completely legitimate," he said.

But the suggestion felt like a lead brick on an angry Fitzgerald, who compared the suggestion to three council members helping to furnish Costick's home.

Fitzgerald showed Fox a 1988 let-

'They (historic district commissioners) have not been asked by this commission,' said parks and recreation chairman Dennis Fitzgerald.

ter in which she, as a historic district commissioner, told parks and recreation commissioners that the historic district commission's purview is the exterior, not the interior, of the house.

The parks and recreation commis-

sion oversees the city's parks and parks and recreation programs, including financing improvements with revenue generated from the city's five-year 0.05-mill parks and recreation levy.

On the historic district commis-

sion's recommendation, the Spicer house was placed in the city's protected historic district in 1988. Both the historic district commission and the parks and recreation commission in 1988 agreed to use the historic house as a visitors center for the 211-acre Heritage Park.

"This is an important house," Fox said. "It would be unfortunate if this house — if done in such a way — that when people come in the house and say, 'they had a wonderful house it's too bad they couldn't live up to what it could be.'"

Other council members, however, supported Fitzgerald. "I don't think the city manager has any business on this committee," Ben Marks said.

Councilwoman Nancy Bates

agreed. "I think they'll seek advice if they need it."

COUNCILMAN Jonathan Grant said it appears that how furnishing of the house would be handled was decided long ago. "From what I see, they are definitely in touch with the historical character of this house," Grant said.

Councilman Lawrence Lichtman said he understood Fitzgerald's position. "I think it's somewhat insulting to the parks and recreation commission to injecting another body when it comes to finishing this house."

Potter said the \$387,000 restoration of the house's interior is expected to be finished by March or April. Work on the outside will follow.

Hills woman guilty on cocaine charge

A Farmington Hills woman was put on probation after pleading guilty in a drug conspiracy case that involved many middle-class professionals, police investigators said.

Oakland County Circuit Judge Steven Andrews Jan. 25 sentenced Elaine Noring, 33, to two years' probation, 100 hours of community service and a \$500 fine for conspiracy to possess less than 25 grams of cocaine.

He also ordered her to enter a substance abuse program, to not possess a controlled substance without a prescription and to not associate with any of 22 co-defendants in the conspiracy.

Noring, a certified public accountant and former college instructor, was one of 22 suburbanites — including business owners, lawyers, homemakers, auto workers, doctors — arrested on possession or conspiracy charges in November.

She was one of five people who Andrews sentenced after they pleaded guilty to either possessing cocaine or conspiracy to possess it. They faced up to four years in prison.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY Robert E. Berg of Grosse Pointe Woods pointed out that Andrews, in sentencing Noring, said she "had some outstanding qualities, had been an asset to the community and could

be an even bigger asset to the community because she still had a lot to offer."

"We agree with that assessment," Berg said.

Noring is not involved with cocaine today, was never arrested for possessing cocaine and was never alleged to have cocaine in her home. "Her involvement, if any, in the conspiracy was very, very minimal," Berg said.

Berg said there's "not necessarily a relationship between my client and 99.9 percent of the others. It's hard to imagine it's all one conspiracy. I don't think I ever accepted that."

The 22 suburbanites were charged in connection with a mid-level, \$16-million cocaine distribution ring that operated from 1983-88, according to the Southeast Michigan Conspiracy Organization, a Livonia-based regional police agency.

KEY FIGURES in the conspiracy were Arthur Sterling Abrams, 43, a Farmington Hills resident until his 1987 arrest on cocaine charges, and Lawrence Genoa, 42, of Dearborn Heights, convicted in October for cocaine trafficking, said SEMCO Sgt. Ray White.

Abrams is listed repeatedly in a 1989 federal grand jury drug indictment. Genoa, a financier, was an indicted co-conspirator.

Ex-WB man remains an enigma

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"He brought the county to its knees for a year and a half. This signals the end of it," Werner said. "We spent a tremendous amount of hours on this case — more hours than any other case we've been involved in."

Oakland County, until the attacks began, felt immune to the possibility

of such things as serial rapists, Werner said. "It woke up the community."

While the actual criminal justice process has ended, Werner said the effect of the acts on the victims won't end with the trial.

"The judge said that he's ruined their lives. Unless you or someone in

your family has been a victim, you can't really appreciate what these people are going through. It's over but they'll never forget," Werner said.

The only consolation, he added, is that Szeeman will be an old man if he ever gets out.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY Lawrence Kaluzny is hoping that someday Szeeman will get some professional psychiatric help.

"I've handled hundreds of criminal cases but this one was different.

He didn't try to hide the fact that he committed these acts. He just wants to know why he did it," Kaluzny said.

According to both attorney and prosecutor, Szeeman's life should have been one of those happy ending stories. A varsity baseball player while attending college in southern Ohio, he left with a bachelor's degree and a promise of a good career.

Though he floated from job to job in Michigan, he had settled into a computer sales position in Ohio shortly after the Oakland County rapes ceased.

Rapist faces life in jail

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ing guilty eliminated the need for a trial, which was scheduled to begin Feb. 16.

Szeeman became flustered after assistant prosecutor John Slevin said for the third time that he had not heard explanations for a crime, which meant Szeeman had to repeat details of the acts.

"This is hard enough as it is," said defense attorney Lawrence Kaluzny. "To make him go through this twice isn't fair. It just isn't fair."

None of the victims made public statements at the Friday hearing, though Slevin said each did send a letter to the judge regarding Szeeman's sentencing.

Under Michigan's victims rights law, a victim has the right to make statements that may affect the final sentence. Each victim asked that the judge put Szeeman in jail for the rest of his life, Slevin said.

In his closing argument, Kaluzny told the court that "this has been a difficult case for everyone."

"IT'S AN understatement to say Mr. Szeeman's acts caused grief and

suffering — not only to the victims but the families as well, including his. Nothing he could say is going to change what happened," Kaluzny said.

Pleading guilty to all the charges, he said, was Szeeman's way of apologizing for his actions.

Szeeman was convicted of charges stemming from a series of sexual assaults on female victims during 1987-88 in Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield, Birmingham, Bloomfield Township and Independence Township.

The victims ranged in age from 12 to 61.

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