

Group fears plan would hurt wetlands

By Darrell Clem
staff writer

A group of Lakes Area homeowners will ask the West Bloomfield Wetlands Board to block a proposed housing development that residents fear would damage the environment. The residents want the board to "save from destruction" a nature area they contend would be de-

stroyed by a single-family housing development of 24 houses bounded by Willow, Alden and Arneth roads in the township's northwest section. The houses, proposed by Farmington Hills developer Barry Stulberg, would be built on a 28-acre triangular site nestled by Union, Green and Flanders lakes.

Residents are concerned that the development will destroy wetlands and woodlands, force wildlife to flee and pollute the drinking water supply from wells.

"These wetlands are to the surrounding lakes what the rain forests are to Central and South America," said homeowner Roger Pendell, who met with some 30 residents Wednesday to plan opposition to the project.

Though some residents plan to take their concerns to the wetlands board when it meets Wednesday, Stulberg said their action will be premature.

"Environmental studies are being conducted (by the township) right now to determine the effect of my development on the area," Stulberg said. "Their concerns are premature, and I expect to show them that they have no need to be alarmed."

The wetlands board has tabled the project until the study can be completed. Stulberg, who hopes to launch the development this fall, also would need approval from the woodlands board, the planning commission and the township board.

Pendell criticized Stulberg for planning to fill in portions of wetlands and tear down many of the area's trees.

Stulberg said 42 percent of the trees would be destroyed, but added,

"I'm not taking down any more than is permitted under the (township woodlands) ordinance."

"A lot of care was taken in preparing these plans with regard to protecting the environment and taking out the least desirable of the woods and saving the more mature woods. Particular care was taken to staying away from the wetlands," Stulberg said.

In response to criticism that he plans to fill in more than 200 cubic yards of wetlands, Stulberg responded that the area represents less than 1 percent of the wetlands area.

He said the wetlands would be disturbed only in two places — where a driveway would be built to serve two houses and where sewer lines would cross wetlands to reach one house.

Residents fear the project would pollute surface and ground water resources and adversely affect the water quality of the surrounding lakes. "Ground water is a vital resource

since many homes in the area depend on wells for drinking water," Pendell wrote in his statement.

But Stulberg countered charges that his project will pollute the water, saying, "That's absolutely not true."

Pendell said the area's wilderness "is a precious and irreplaceable natural resource which is integral to the Lakes Area ecosystem." He added that it shelters a variety of woodland animals and provides nesting for blue herons, Canada geese and wood ducks.

Residents are considering hiring an attorney and seeking environmental specialists to help them fight the project. Homeowners would like to see the area designated a nature preserve.

Stulberg, calling himself an "environmentally sensitive" developer, said he believes the residents should wait for the results of the environmental study before they voice such strong objections to the project.

clarification

A story in the Thursday, April 19, edition of the Observer about the Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills should have quoted neighbor William Shortt as

saying: Judge Fred Harris should not have relieved center director Dorothy Pfaff of her legal responsibility in this matter by shifting the responsibility for any future

illegal acts by the community center to the community center officers and board members."

A story in the Thursday, April 12, edition about a Farmington Hills couple active in freeing their Lithuanian homeland should have said their name was Jurgutis.

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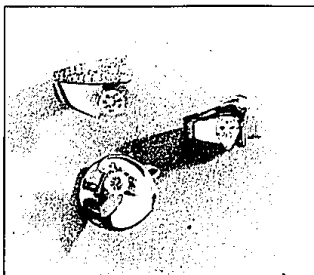
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