

Residents battle for ZIP code

By Paul's Kirsch special writer

In October 1985, the southwest Farmington Hills address committee submitted its first petition seeking a change in postal designation to Farmington Postmaster Kenneth Harris.

It was rejected in February 1986 because it covered only two of the four subdivisions in the square mile. Meadowbrook Park, with a total of 140 lots, was 85 percent in favor of the address change. At that time, 119 homes were in favor of the change, including 59 vacant lots represented by Standard Federal Savings.

Meadowhills Estates, with a total of 186 occupied homes, was 90 percent in favor of the address change, with 229 signatures obtained from 162 households. Roughly 4 percent of the homeowners were not home during the petition drive. Meadowbrook Forest (39 lots) and Meadowbrook Hills (28 lots) were not included in the first petition, bringing the total percentage in favor for the total square mile down to just 41 percent.

A letter from James Miller, U.S. Postal Service manager and postmaster at the Royal Oak post office,

through which Farmington-area mail is routed, indicated that a petition representing a majority for the entire square mile would result in further consideration of "complete conversion of the entire square mile area to Farmington delivery service."

ENCOURAGED BY this response, John Arbuckle and his committee of volunteers hit the streets with their petition again. They stopped canvassing when they had signatures representing 65 percent of the total square mile. The second petition was submitted to Farmington Postmaster Harris in July 1986.

Donna Katchorian also wrote to U.S. Sens. Carl Levin and Donald Riegle, who then became involved with their constituents' crusade.

The only official reply to the second petition from the U.S. Postal Service was addressed to the senators. Assistant Postmaster General William Johnstone and William Bergen, a representative from the Office of Government Liaison, both in Washington, stated that the petition was not granted because the expenses involved would amount to nearly \$50,000.

"The difference is primarily attributable to the different methods

of compensating rural and city carriers," Johnstone said.

Johnstone also stated in his letter that, "The Farmington Hills post office is already overcrowded and placing additional carriers in that facility would add to the problems."

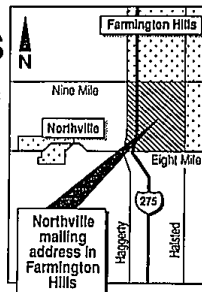
He went on to say that the associated administrative costs, not yet calculated, would increase the cost of a change by thousands of dollars.

SEN. LEVIN pursued the issue further in a letter to Postmaster General Tisch on March 17, 1987, when he learned that a new subdivision being developed across from the

one square mile in question would carry the city name and ZIP code of Farmington Hills, 48024, as would other new developments in the area.

Levin went on to say, "I also have been told by the postmaster of Farmington/Farmington Hills that he believes that it makes sense for the one square mile in question to carry the designation, Farmington Hills, 48024, and that it would be no problem to absorb this area into his delivery system."

No response was forthcoming from the Postmaster General's office at that time.



Continued from Page 1

dents of the area, have long been involved in the mailing address dispute.

ARBUCKLE'S FIRST written complaint, lodged in November 1983, was about mail that was addressed to Farmington Hills but was returned to sender and sometimes stamped, "No Such Address." According to Arbuckle and several of his neighbors, having a street in Farmington Hills and a city of Northville mailing address is very confusing and potentially dangerous. "I imagine the police trying to contact us in an emergency based on a Northville address on our license," Arbuckle said. "Our telephone number is listed in the Farmington Hills directory because the phone company considers it to be our residence and Insubbrook doesn't exist on a Northville city map."

"The fact that it is confusing is not conjecture. We have already experienced complications having items delivered."

Also insurance rates are often figured incorrectly, Arbuckle said. "Northville is in a different county and they charge us the rate applicable to that area."

Another area resident, Donna Katchorian, lost the insurance on her house as a result of the post office holding her mail when she moved to the neighborhood in 1983. Because everything was addressed to Farmington Hills, it was all either returned to sender or just held at the Farmington Post Office.

Meadowhills Estates resident Steve Machacek has had no problems with the Northville address.

"We've never had a problem with lost mail or people not being able to find the house. Everyone in the area seems to be familiar with the situation. Even Domino's Pizza can find us. I just don't see a beneficial reason to change," he said.

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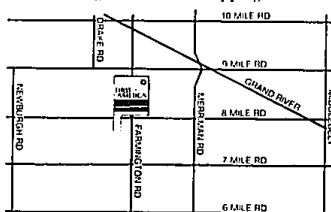
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