

Project is deer one to scout

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— visible from a large deck at the top of a steep hill south of the Spicer Estate House (park visitors center). The other station is near the south-west end of the park.

In the research process Bouchard met with Farmington Hills naturalists and residents Joe Derek and Don Millington, a planning commissioner, both of whom supported the Eagle Scout project.

But Bouchard ran into some stumbling blocks. Based on the recommendation of other naturalists in Oakland County, the city's parks and recreation division denied Bouchard's project. "We were never down on the idea. We thought it was a great idea, just not in this park," said Eric Wurminger, assistant director of the city's special services department.

All Eagle Scout projects that come to the city go through Wurminger. But Bouchard's request came near the time some residents voiced concern about development and the park environment, Wurminger said.

Naturalists contacted by the city said feeding the deer in the park would upset the natural balance. It would make the deer aggressive and dangerous and may encourage poaching.

ANOTHER NATURALIST said the project might increase the deer population and that deer in the park are not natural to the park, which the naturalist said hasn't had a native deer population for 20 years.

"When I got the call from Mr. Wurminger that they disapproved, I didn't want to finish it. I wanted to



DANIEL LIPPIT/staff photographer

Andrew Bouchard is all smiles over one of his deer feeders in Farmington Hills' Heritage Park. Bouchard supervised the building of the feeders to earn his Eagle Scout award.

quit," Bouchard said. But he didn't. Finally, Bouchard, with his father, Ron, in the audience, appealed to the city council and got unanimous approval of his project.

"We think the city and fellow residents are proud of the aspects of nature. Why shouldn't the park be used for what the Spicer family intended

it for?" Ron Bouchard said. From the deck south of the Spicer Estate House, visitors can see one of the feeding stations and any deer that come by for dinner. "I encourage people to come and feed them," Bouchard said. The feeders must be refilled weekly, which he said he will do.

Parks chairman contacts Headlee

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Farmington Hills taxpayers will be asked to support a half-mill levy for eight years for parks and recreation projects. The city's original half-mill levy approved by voters in 1985 expired July 1990.

Headlee and Anderson took issue with the school millage proposals, which were defeated overwhelmingly Feb. 5. They spent upwards of \$10,000 in what they called an informational campaign about the school budget and millage proposals. Headlee is the author of the 1978 Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment.

FITZGERALD CONTACTED the pair because he wanted to provide them with the facts: how the parks and recreation commission spent the revenues from the former levy and how they plan to spend an estimated \$9.6 million if approved in May.

"We'll take anybody's blessings," Fitzgerald said. "The first I was told I was giving Dick Headlee more recognition than he deserves. But Dick Headlee is a business owner in this community with a special interest like anyone else."

"The good news is Dick Headlee is looking at it from an economic standpoint," Fitzgerald continued. And with that, Fitzgerald is optimistic.

Anderson said he was impressed at the first meeting with Fitzgerald. "I was impressed that the first thing he showed me was the flyer showing what was promised would be done with the first half-mill. They had accomplished most of what they had promised."

But Anderson admitted that Farmington Hills resident Roy Lindhardt who has campaigned for pro-tection of the city-owned Peltz-MDOT acreage, south of I-696, west of Farmington Road, also contacted him. A week ago, Lindhardt told the Observer he is concerned that the eight-year parks and recreation plan, describing how the tax renewal would be spent, does not adequately

protect the 72 acres from develop-ment.

"We are listening to those who have legitimate concerns," Anderson said.

ANDERSON SAID he and Headlee — both Farmington Hills residents — continue to review the city's tax proposal and expect to make a decision within a week. That decision will be to support the proposal, oppose it or remain neutral.

"Our focus is to make sure they (taxpayers) are getting value for their dollars," Anderson said. "We're willing to pay more than the average. We want parks and recreation that's better than the average. But we want to be sure dollars are well spent," Anderson said.

Fitzgerald says there is a lesson to be learned in the defeat of the school district's millage proposals. "You better be good stewards of the dollar. Our life is an open book," he said.

"I know we are going to get a decision from them (Anderson and Headlee) otherwise they wouldn't be asking questions," Fitzgerald continued.

The eight-year action plan totals an estimated \$10.9 million. The half-mill levy, if approved, would generate an estimated \$9.6 million over eight years. City officials hope the difference can be financed with state grants.

The plan includes land acquisition, development of ballfields and soccer fields, bike paths, senior adult-cultural facilities and programs, Heritage Park improvements, some development such as a picnic area and entrance road on Peltz-MDOT and expansion of city-owned San Marino Golf Course.

Also included in the plan is the purchase of a roving recreational program trailer, purchase of senior adult vehicles and leasing or contracting for a facility or programs for teens.

Economist urges Hills officials to campaign

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Farmington Hills economist Patrick Anderson says he hopes Farmington Hills officials will get out and discuss their half-mill parks and recreation tax.

"I certainly encourage the city officials who voted to put it on the ballot to campaign for it as long as they don't use taxpayers' dollars," said Anderson, an economist with Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co of America, Inc.

Dennis Fitzgerald, chairman of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission, said commissioners have formed a "Yes to Parks" committee and invited whomever wants to participate to get involved, including elected city officials.

Anderson said he believes the Farmington Public Schools would have gotten more yes votes Feb. 5 when two millage proposals were defeated if school board members had gone out and debated the issues.

"Individual public officials can get involved but not using the public purse," Anderson said.

FARMINGTON Hills taxpayers will be asked to support a half-mill levy for eight years for parks and recreation May 7. The request is a renewal though it is for three years more than the original five-year half-mill levy that expired July 1990.

Fitzgerald acknowledged that tax dollars would not be used to print and distribute flyers or brochures for the May 7 parks and recreation vote. He said city-owned facilities also won't be used for informational meetings or other efforts to campaign for the vote.

Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi said he plans to get involved. "I plan to do it on my own time. If I didn't believe in it (the proposed millage), I wouldn't have voted for it (at the city council level)."

Anderson also cautioned that city officials may not be given voting lists from the city clerk's office free of charge. "They have to pay the same price as anyone," he said.

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