

DDA wants to fly with its banners

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The state must give its permit each time the DDA puts up a different banner on Grand River; the DDA gets annual permission from the county for use along Farmington Road. In all, there are 22 banners, with 13 hanging on Grand River.

"I hope this won't interfere with our Festival banners," said Jody Soroczen, executive director for the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and a DDA board member who is gearing up for the July 11-13 annual summer event. The festival banners, sponsored by the Metrovision cable company, are usually installed several weeks before the festival begins and have already been used several times.

The DDA stands to lose the use of at least four sponsored banner sets worth nearly \$11,000 — three already used with sponsorships by Metrovision and Botaford General Hospital and one proposed by Metrobank.

EACH SET COST the sponsors a flat rate of \$2,700 and were purchased with the understanding they would run several times over a period of years.

"It's not only a lot of money, but people invested thinking their name would be in the community," said DDA executive director Wendy Strip-Sittamer. "There's an issue of our credibility."

The issue arose as Strip-

Sittamer proceeded with the usual permit process for an American flag banner design to be sponsored by Metrobank this spring. State permit officials in a regional office in Southfield turned thumbs-down to the idea, saying the sponsorship constituted a commercial advertising message.

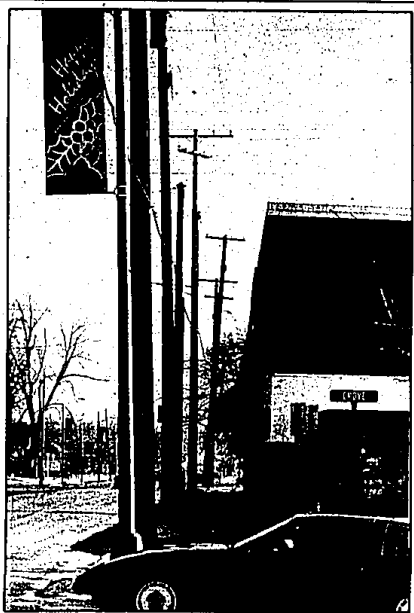
They also said they were in error on previous occasions, and the DDA would be prohibited from using sponsored banners again.

Dave Spangenberg, a supervisor in MDOT's Utilities and Permits Division in Lansing, said he was familiar with the Farmington case, and that the problem remained under review.

"We're trying to sort all that out," he said. "We're discussing it internally here in Lansing. We're trying to determine what is advertising and what isn't."

Spangenberg said the department is reviewing language in Public Act 200 of 1989, which discusses the issue of advertising copy on banners. He said he was not sure why state employees in the Southfield regional office had allowed the Farmington banners to be used for four years without problem. He said his department is expected to have an answer sometime in the next several weeks.

The DDA contends the sponsorships are nothing more than a tagline, not messages advertising merchandise or political messages, which are not allowed either under state or local banner guidelines.



FILE PHOTO

Banners like the one above — except with the name of a sponsor on it — have been trouble for the Farmington Downtown Development Authority.

City to buy trees

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It would be the last planting effort underwritten by the city. Wynset representatives agreed to adjust their watering schedule, and the city plans to have Michigan State Cooperative Extension Service personnel check the ground for problems before planting again.

"I'm going to give it one more shot, with the understanding you won't come back," Councilman Ralph Yoder told representatives of Wynset in making the motion.

Councilman William Hartsock said "the trees were alive and well prior to the (sewer) project. Something happened. Because it's in the public right-of-way, we share in the responsibility."

Voting against the motion was Councilwoman Joanne McShane, who said she was "reluctant to plant more trees where trees have died three times." She had suggested the city and association share the cost. Although voting in favor of the new trees, Mayor Shirley Richardson said she believed the city had already "done their part. I personally don't think we have any obligation at all."

City manager Robert Deadman said he had dealt with numerous Wynset board presidents over the years in trying to get the problem corrected. The city even tried a dif-

ferent tree variety the last time, hoping they would survive.

"We said, tongue-in-cheek, perhaps we should plant willows," he added.

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Paper makes changes

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And don't forget in Monday's issue the new, all-color travel section as well as the Taste cooking section and the ever-popular youth-oriented

Street Scene.

Keep an eye out for these changes and let us know what you think. Thanks and enjoy.

Steve Barnaby
managing editor

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