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Oxford residents complain about traffic

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Ask Oxford Street residents and they'll tell you a driveway from Botsford General Hospital to their quiet residential street has never existed.

"We do not know how you can open what never existed. There was never a driveway there," said Oxford resident Massie Kurzeja. "This is something that has never existed. We were promised by the (Farmington) township board there would be no traffic coming out on our street."

But traffic — trucks and employees, according to residents — has been coming out from the west side of Botsford to Oxford, especially with the start of a \$30 million construction project at the facility.

Oxford residents drew attention to their concerns with the Oxford gate or driveway Monday when they saw a request on the city

council agenda to approve a prohibition on right turns northbound onto Oxford from the Botsford emergency area.

The city council did not act on the request Monday and postponed it until the next meeting Monday, July 15. Council members asked for records and a site plan from township days in the 1960s to show whether the Oxford gate is really a hospital driveway or not.

UNDER A TEMPORARY traffic order issued in May, right turns are now prohibited onto Oxford — at least through most of July. The request is to extend that prohibition.

Botsford administrator Gerson Cooper disagrees with Oxford residents. The Oxford gate, he said, is a city-approved entrance/exit for the hospital. "There is nothing in writing that prohibits us from using that exit," Cooper said.

The gate, however, had remained closed for the most part until construction forced the opening of the Oxford gate to allow emergency vehicles.

The gate is open to allow both ambulances and private vehicles carrying emergency patients to use Oxford to avoid construction around the hospital campus, Cooper said.

City Manager William Costick said he gave the hospital permission to open the gate because of the expressed concern about emergency vehicles.

But residents said they don't understand how the city can approve a prohibition on right turns from the gate when the gate cannot be opened for traffic. Robert Boyd told the council the gate is to be used specifically for fire trucks to use the hydrant on Oxford.

"I was there when the hospital was first

built," said Boyd, a former volunteer firefighter at that time.

RESIDENTS complained that employees and trucks servicing the hospital use the Oxford gate. That is, unless there is a guard on duty who prevents it.

"They have the expertise to develop routes for traffic on their own property," Oxford resident Carol Boyd said. "Why should residents have to put up with it?"

Oxford resident Betty Cook described an oxygen truck — "as big as any gasoline truck" coming out of the gate and turning onto Oxford. She spoke of the signs posted at the gate allowing only emergency vehicles.

"That meant nothing to employees, staff and truck drivers," Cook said.

"It's terrible to live there and have this going on 24 hours a day."

But Cooper said the hospital is doing what

it can. "It is the intent of the hospital to have emergency vehicles or people accessing the emergency room to use that gate," he said, adding he has asked police to ticket violators.

"It is very difficult to control . . . especially visitors and patients who have used the emergency. We are doing what we can to keep the nuisance value to a minimum."

The administrator said he could not "in good conscience" ask emergency traffic to travel through a maze of construction around the hospital.

Councilman Larry Lichtman told Cooper "I haven't heard a compelling reason" why the hospital cannot make arrangements for traffic on campus. He also asked what the worst case scenario would be.

"Sir, you are putting me in an uncomfortable position," Cooper responded. "If the council says, 'Lock it tomorrow,' I think we would have to go to court."

Worker shocked by live wire

A 26-year-old electrical worker was hospitalized in stable condition Tuesday after being shocked by a live Detroit Edison wire while working on the job.

Gerald Kowalski, an employee of Harlan Electric Co., was working on the ground near some support cables at Drake Road north of 12 Mile when the cables apparently came in contact with a live Detroit Edison wire.

The incident occurred at about 10:25 a.m.

"Our hope is that he recovers from this," said Farmington Hills Deputy Fire Chief Peter Baldwin. "He took

quite a jolt."

Kowalski was given cardio-pulmonary resuscitation at the scene immediately, and Community Emergency Medical Services medical technicians and Farmington Hills firefighters were on the scene within three minutes using the department's automatic defibrillator unit on the man before transporting him to Botsford General Hospital. Firefighters found Kowalski on the ground, absent of all vital signs, according to fire department reports.

The automatic defibrillator sends electric energy to the body tissue af-

fecting the heart directly, returning the heart to a normal rhythm.

Although stable, Kowalski remained in the hospital's critical care unit, a spokeswoman said.

Farmington Hills firefighters used the automatic defibrillator unit in August 1989 to save the life of a 20-year-old Southfield woman at Windemere Apartments on Independence Drive. Tara Heichel was discovered on top of a metal ladder which had apparently made contact with a Detroit Edison power line.

She recovered from her ordeal after more than a month of hospitalization.



Playing her part

Eleven-year-old Andria Villar shows plenty of emotion as she acts out her part as a king in a play sponsored by the Creative Kids Summer Theater held at the Farmington Community center. The play, "Earthlings," was written by instructor Wendy Clinard and some college friends. Clinard, a 20-year-old Farmington resident, attends the University of Chicago. The play will be staged at 7 p.m. Thursday, July 18, at the Community Center's amphitheater. A \$1 admission will be charged.

SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Puppet troupe performs 'Rumpelstiltskin'

Rumpelstiltskin, the children's classic, will come to life in downtown Farmington Wednesday, July 3.

Presented by the String Puppet Theatre and puppeteer Bill Siemers, the production is the fourth in a 10-week Summer Fun Series sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority.

Show times for the half-hour production are 11 a.m., noon and 1 p.m. under the green-and-white-striped tent in the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot.

The String Puppet Theatre has been touring coast-to-coast for more than five years.

As added entertainment Wednesday, Sassy the Dog will drive throughout downtown Farmington

between performances in his 1930 wood panel truck.

The DDA program is designed to tie into the agency's goal of maintaining a vigorous downtown district while retaining a small community atmosphere.

For more information on this program, or others in the series, call the DDA office at 473-7275.

For what it's worth, you may want to hold off on that import.



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