

Kenney's motto: Council works for taxpayers

Editor's note: Five candidates — including three incumbents and two challengers — will vie for three seats on the Farmington City Council Tuesday, Nov. 5. Today we focus on challenger John Kenney.

By Casey Hens
Staff writer

Farmington resident John Kenney wants to "knock the status quo" and make city hall more accessible.

"The feeling with both the council and the administration is that you can't fight city hall," said the Pickett Street resident who is making a second try at a city council seat this year. He ran unsuccessfully in 1989.

"I really don't have a tunnel vision type of attitude. I know there's two sides to every story — everybody has an opinion."

And the 45-year-old Iowa native and 15-year Farmington resident has

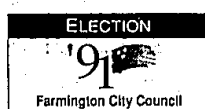
an opinion on just about every issue.

His motto is "the council does not work for the city of Farmington. It works for the taxpayers" and he believes the city needs to look carefully at spending practices as state and federal funding is pared.

"I see my role as a councilman as protecting the taxpayer from the excesses of municipal government and to help the taxpayers get the best value for their dollars spent," he said.

HE BELIEVES part of the reason Farmington is losing population is because of increases in property tax assessments — the biggest concern of today's residents, he said. "There's people living below the poverty level here, and people don't seem too concerned about it," he added. "They tend to ignore it."

A wastewater treatment specialist for Wayne Disposal, Inc., Kenney first became involved in local poli-



tics in the late 1960s, when he returned from the Army to work for the Iowa City City Council. Raised and educated in Iowa, he came to Michigan to marry his wife Kathleen, a Flint native. They have one daughter, 14-year-old Erin, who attends Farmington High School.

Over the years, he has followed environmental issues through his work and has been employed by a number of companies, including the city of Detroit. Kenney has also floated his way around several states as a hot air balloon pilot, which he has done both as a hobby and for a living.



'I see my role as a councilman as protecting the taxpayer from the excesses of municipal government and to help the taxpayers get the best value for their dollars spent.'

— John Kenney
council hopeful

Kenney first ran for city council in 1989 in Farmington because he said he was told "maybe he should find a community where he could afford it" when he protested his tax bill. One of

his goals in running, he said, is to "knock the status quo. I want to give it a shot just to stir people up."

KENNEY SAID he would like a

better balance between the attention paid to residents and to the city's business district. "Neighbors seem alienated from the city," he said. "There's a lot of people living in this community who aren't businesspeople. I would represent them."

Kenney also had experience as co-owner of a downtown business several years ago, and believes people should be allowed to conduct business without interference from city hall, such as the recent temporary sign ordinance restrictions currently under debate.

Business signage is one of the issues listed on Kenney's hot pink election flyers being circulated in the city. In his literature, Kenney said he is in favor of limiting terms of office, wants more competitive bidding on city contracts, wants to decrease expenses without increasing taxes, believes the new recycling fee is a tax, and wants more things for kids to do in the community.

Longevity leads Sever to role of leadership

Editor's note: As the Nov. 5 Farmington Hills City Council election draws near, the Observer will be talking with the seven candidates and letting you know who they are, what they think they can do for the city, and how they stand on issues.

By Joanne Maliszewski
Staff writer

Longevity is what Terry Sever says he has going for him as he seeks his third term on the Farmington Hills City Council.

But there's more to the longevity than his six years — one two-year term and a four-year term — on the council. And Sever is the first to admit it wasn't an easy road.

"I came in as a challenger to the good old boys. It was tough to inject ideas. But now after six years on the council, I find myself in a leadership role."

In 1978, he made his first unsuccessful bid for the council. He took off a few years biding his time, then came back in 1984. Sever lost his bid for the council. A heartwrencher came in 1985 when he lost by one vote to councilman Ben Marks in a recount. In 1986, Sever got his seat on the council by seven votes.



'It's not easy up here. You just don't join the city council and change the world. I'm going to stand on the good things we've done and the good things we're going to do in the future.'

— Terry Sever
council candidate

"I feel good about the position I'm in. I'm not taking it for granted. People still expect something," said Sever, 41, who served as mayor in 1989. SOON TO complete his sixth year, Sever said 1991 has been good for him. "Personally, this past year has been well-balanced as far as business, my family and politics."

Last year, Sever threw his hat into a bigger political ring — the race for state Senate. He didn't win. But he

captured 35 percent of the combined Farmington-Farmington Hills votes. Primary victor, Denise Alexander, a Southfield City Council member, captured 40 percent of the combined vote.

Sever, who owns TL Printing in Farmington — the TL stands for his hopes in the local political system. "It's not easy up here. You just don't join the city council and change the world," he said at a recent candi-



dates night debate. You have to be a cooperative council member.

"I'm going to stand on the good things we've done and the good things we're going to do in the future."

Sever says he wants to continue on the council to complete tasks that were begun while he's been on the council. Major issues facing the city, Sever said, in the next four years include the need to buy additional land for recreation, addressing with a result — senior adults' need for a facility of their own, the recycling fee versus tax, and the need "to stabilize the city budget."

Sever said he is concerned about residential property tax assessments, particularly because annual increases exceed the inflation rate. In the past two years, Sever voted against the city budgets because he said the millage rate should have

been rolled back.

SEVER EXPECTS to spend about \$3,000 though \$5,000 "is legitimate to spend. I've pretty much limited myself. Money seems to talk with some people. Money doesn't impress me that much."

Sever is walking door-to-door to meet and talk with voters. He says he has been concerned about voters' perspectives about the city council.

"I've been finding that people like it when we argue the issues out," he said. "No one has been in favor of seven members who think alike."

Like all the seven candidates seeking election to the four seats this year, Sever is cognizant of the council's well-known bickering and dragged out meetings where issues are hashed and reshaped.

"When you elect four people at a time, you elect people that are opposing. The more controversial you are the more likely you are to be elected," he said.

But Sever believes the council has straightened itself out. He credits Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi with setting the tone of cooperation on the current council.

Though criticized for mentioning

he would have like to have continued as mayor after his 1989 stint, Sever still believes the mayor should be an elected position.

"It would be easier to have a clear cut direction of where people want the city to go," Sever said. An elected mayor would be the political leader of the city while the city manager would remain as the administrative leader.

Sever says he's worthy of re-election. He says he's developed ideas, solutions to problems, such as strict enforcement of liquor laws in the city.

He credits himself with being the council member who drew attention to the Peltz-MDOT property and pushed for its purchase. Now he's waiting for the city council to appoint members to an ad hoc senior facilities committee — his idea — to ensure that commitments to the area's senior adults and their need for a permanent facility are fulfilled.

"People have a right to challenge the decisions I've made. People in this community are the boss. I'll get my report card and see how I've done."

Candidates speak on cable TV

Following is a list of candidates of the Farmington-area candidate nights. The election is Nov. 5.

Monday, Oct. 14, 6 p.m., Democratic Club, Channel 12.
Thursday, Oct. 17, 6:30 p.m., Republican Club, Channel 12.
Monday, Oct. 21, 7 p.m., Republican Club, Channel 12.
Tuesday, Oct. 22, 11 a.m., Democratic Club, Channel 12.

Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2 p.m., Republican Club, Channel 12.
Wednesday, Oct. 23, 7 p.m., COHA, Channel 18 (Live).
Friday, Oct. 25, 6 p.m., Democratic Club, Channel 12.
Tuesday, Oct. 29, 8 p.m., Democratic Club, Channel 12.
Wednesday, Oct. 30, 7 p.m., Republican Club, Channel 12.
Friday, Nov. 1, 6 p.m., Democratic Club, Channel 12.

Club, Channel 12.
Friday, Nov. 1, 8 p.m., COHA, Channel 12.
Monday, Nov. 4, 10 a.m., Republican Club, Channel 12.
Monday, Nov. 4, 4 p.m., Republican Club, Channel 12.
Monday, Nov. 4, 7 p.m., Democratic Club, Channel 12.
Monday, Nov. 4, 9 p.m., COHA, Channel 12.

election notes

Editor's note: Throughout the 1991 races for Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils, we will include under this heading items such as scheduled candidates nights, endorsements, campaign information or other tidbits voters may find interesting about the political race. The election is Tuesday, Nov. 5.

• The Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors endorsed the millage proposal for improvement and expansion of the 47th District Court.

The proposal will be on the Nov. 5 ballot for both Farmington and Farmington Hills voters.

"Local business people have many occasions to participate in the local court system and in its present space they find the facility inadequate and with the addition of a third judge to help the burgeoning case load, the expansion is vital."

• The Farmington Old Village Association is hosting a "Meet the Candidates" night at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 25 at the Farmington Masonic Temple, at Farmington Road and Grand River.

The events gives voters a chance to meet the five candidates seeking election to the Farmington City Council.

Each candidate will give a one-minute introductory statement and a round-robin question-answer session will follow. Questions will be submitted before the debate. Answers will be limited to one minute.

Audience members also will have an opportunity to ask questions from the floor. The FOVA sponsored a similar event during the 1989 city council elections.

'Midnight madness' tops city's seasonal promotions

Downtown Farmington merchants are continuing a series of seasonal promotions by hosting a "midnight madness" sale later this month and planning a holiday promotion for early December.

The city's Downtown Development Authority also has stepped up its marketing efforts, earmarking \$35,000 to pay for proposed promotions programs in the coming year and continuing to offer matched money of up to \$10,000 to the local merchants' group to share in promotional costs.

A Midnight Madness sale has been scheduled for Friday, Oct. 25, and will include store specials from 10 a.m. through midnight, cider and doughnuts sponsored by the Downtown Farmington Business Association, five large character balloons and special mallonee and late night shows at the Civic Theater.

THE EVENT is sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority and the Downtown Farmington Business Association. It ties into a half day of school for Farmington-area

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— Wendy Strip-Sittsamer
Downtown Development Authority director

students, designed to draw families, as well as shoppers, downtown.

"Everybody can't shop during regular business hours," said Downtown Development Authority director Wendy Strip-Sittsamer. "Some of the businesses have a tradition of doing a midnight madness sale. Getting them together in a group can only be better for everyone."

"We've encouraged all the stores to be open until midnight, and we've gotten an excellent response."

ORGANIZERS ALSO are preparing for a Dec. 7 holiday promotion.

The development authority's seasonal promotions program is in its third year. Program planning has gone through much debate and discussion, and at least two promotional companies were used before the development authority hired its own promotions coordinator.

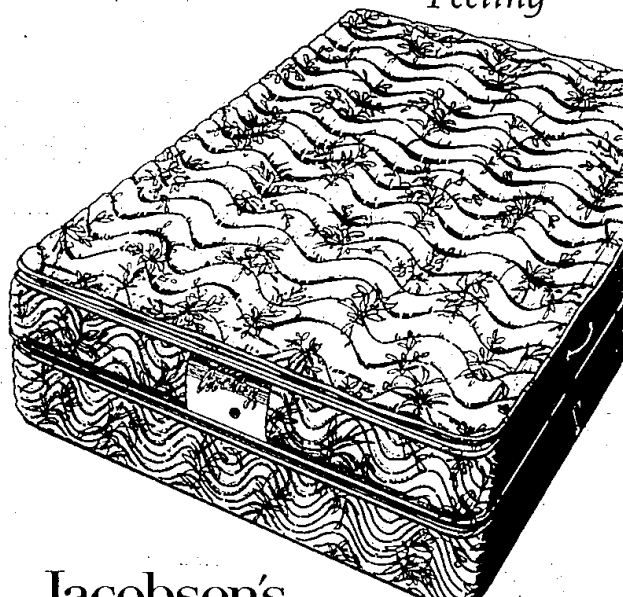
"I think it shows a commitment to marketing the downtown," Strip-Sittsamer said. "I think it shows we have something to market. I don't think we could have done this when we started the (downtown street scape) program."

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