

Candidates differ on fate of Mercy Center

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Mercy Center or not. Incumbent Terry Sever believes a facility must be bought or built for the community's senior adults. And that's a priority.

Incumbents Nancy Bates and Larry Lichtman agree negotiations should continue with the Sisters of Mercy for the center — whether it's talking or buying.

Challengers Ron Oliverio, Joanne Smith and Paul Soverby have a mixed bag of opinions on the center. But all agree attention must be turned toward it as a solution to space problems for senior adult programming.

"My first choice is Mercy," said Sever, a six-year councilman. "I'm opposed to leasing though. I think we need to make a capital investment."

If the city continues to lease the facility on 11 Mile, east of Middlebelt, Sever believes "they'll have us



of programming. I want to buy something and own something," he said. As far as Bates, a two-year councilwoman is concerned, Mercy Center "would answer a lot of facility questions in the community." That includes sports fields, a place for the arts and for senior citizens. "We've been having a difficult time in negotiations just getting them to the table," she said referring to the Sisters of Mercy, who are involved in a year-long study of their own needs, including uses of the center.

While Bates says she "would love for the city to own that property," she finds it difficult to say whether it's better to lease or buy without any cost estimates. "I would hope in negotiations that the city is sensitive to the needs the sisters have," she said, adding that she has no problem with sisters retaining the facility if it is leased. "We are not in conflict with

anything they are doing." Without an available alternative, Lichtman too believes negotiations should continue with the Sisters of Mercy. It's too premature to say whether the facility should be leased or owned.

"WE'VE GOTTEN mixed and conflicting signals of what their (sisters of Mercy) needs might be. In the long run the way to keep a handle on the costs is to own the facility. But until we are able to sort out what (other) land is available... We're doing what we can."

The new ad hoc committee, Lichtman said, is a step in the right direction, but efforts should continue to maintain the same level of services and programming to senior adults and that services keep up with the needs of senior adults — all done cost-effectively, Lichtman said.

Without a doubt, former councilman Paul Soverby says buy Mercy Center now. "It answers so many

questions." The facility can provide flat land for sports in addition to space for senior adults and other community needs. "It's a jewel. It isn't worth debating. As far as I'm concerned, everything is for sale," Soverby said.

Quality of life is what's important. And that means addressing the needs of the community's aging population, said challenger Oliverio, who is making his second bid for a council seat.

"I'd much rather them purchase a facility or build one. It's an investment. Mercy Center is important and must be aggressively pursued," Oliverio said.

Write-in candidate Andrew Raczowski said Mercy "is a perfect spot right now."

officials should concentrate on one at a time. "I'm for keeping the status quo," he said, adding that it's too premature to decide whether it's best to buy or lease.

Smith, chairwoman of the Farmington Hills Planning Commission, says Mercy Center is a place that works. But she's not sure — because she doesn't have cost estimates — whether buying or leasing would be better.

"Maybe this is something we have to ask people. We have to find out how we can serve more people. That's important: to get more people who aren't being served involved. And I think transportation is the problem.

Nonetheless, Smith believes Mercy Center is the starting point for the search for a senior adult facility. "We've been renting all this time. We know it works. We know it's a place that works."

Fox ends her tenure as faithful city servant

Continued from Page 1

cluding 1989 as mayor pro tem and 1990 as mayor. Fox publicly said goodbye Monday. But she also left behind her thoughts on the city — its good and bad points.

"I've had a love affair with this city. And as with most love affairs, it blows hot and cold," Fox told the Observer in a recent interview.

"It's been an interesting 48 months," Fox said Monday, referring to the good and the frustrating moments.

Despite her 33 years of involvement with the city — including the historic commissions, zoning board of appeals and city council — Fox says she is not quitting, or retiring for that matter. She's going to put her energies to use on her own special projects — like another book.

BUT SHE'S not disappearing. She is available to help where she's needed.



Joan Fox outgoing Hills councilwoman

ed. "Belong me, I'll probably speak up."

Personally, Fox says she enjoyed the city council. But there were problems. And she remains concerned. "I've been disappointed to find a few at city hall and on the city council who are strongly committed to protecting the city's future. That's where our problems lie."

She remains concerned about land use density and of protecting the natural beauty of the city. "The general zoning of the city is good," Fox said Monday. "If we don't bargain it away."

Too many consent judgments is the way Fox puts it.

But Fox is just as quick to point out the positive side to the city and its accomplishments. She lauds many of the "good people" on the city's boards and commissions. And she's not bashful about when it comes to applauding those city officials she believes have worked hard and are on the right track. City clerk Kathy Dorman is the first she'll talk about. "One of the state's great city clerks" is Fox's description.

She said city manager William Costick "was fun to work with," and assistant city manager David Call, "a wonderful public servant." She also lauded Dan Rooney, public works director, and the DPW crews, fire and police personnel, for their hard and good work.

After her years of participation in the local governmental process — including a continuing tenure with the Oakland County parks board — Fox says she's still convinced "less government is better government."

AND SHE retains faith in the public. "I think people are pretty sharp. Left to themselves, people will vote for the right things."

SUUI, Fox admits to disappoint-

ments during her council tenure. "Part of it was just wonderful. But when you can't accomplish what you want... We pay a lot of lip service to a lot of issues. But when it gets down to it..."

She was disappointed in how the city responded to Old Town realty continues to ask about Berry Republic and the ensuing agreement made between the city and the social service agency.

Speed limits along Drake Road — one of the city's natural beauty areas — continues to bother Fox, who agrees with residents that more needs to be done to protect the area from becoming a major roadway.

Fox gives the recreation side of the city and its officials a gold star. But she's uncertain how the city is faring on parks. "Not enough people on that (parks and recreation) commission who know enough on parks. I think the community has a commitment. But are the people who are carrying it out committed? I'm not really sure."

She's content with the preservation of the Spicer House in Heritage Park, which she says nature lovers have been working hard to maintain as a passive park.

ON A brighter side, Fox said she is happy with the city's cablecasting of council meetings. "I feel that is the best thing we have done in year. It shows how local government does and doesn't operate. It shows the slowness of government and the interaction. You can't hide from TV. It will show integrity and character — and the lack of it."

She was the only mayor who brought a state convention to Farmington Hills. In Spring 1990, the Historic Preservation Committee all 19 of them — came to the city. "We showcased what we had done out here," she said.

Postal complaints sent to president

Continued from Page 1

able to call the post office — because it is closed — after the last small carrier makes the last delivery.

Frankel also talked of grocery chains who provide postal services, such as stamps, as well as other chains that provide more detailed postal services. "They are trying to pass off the retail to someone else," he said.

"It won't be long before some smart controller in one of these chains says, 'why are we doing this.'" Frankel said, referring to the cost of the postal stations.

"Guess what? You'll be in trouble because the post office won't be doing it either."

BOTH FRANKEL and George Ploskonka, a retired postal carrier, also spoke of postmaster Harris, who has been on the job since November, 1975.

"The postmaster did not do anything wrong," said Ploskonka, who worked at the post office for 24 years. "He is devastated by what they (postal officials) did to him."

In an interview with the Observer, Ploskonka said that Harris — and two other supervisors at the Farmington Hills branch — are accused of making the mail count higher than it actually is.

Ploskonka said it's simply not true. The two other supervisors have had hearings and have been demoted, Ploskonka said. Bates said Tuesday he cannot discuss Harris or the accusations against him.

"As I said before, everyone is innocent until proven guilty," Bates said.

But Ploskonka said the postal service is trying to railroad Harris out of his job. Harris, according to Ploskonka, has filed a lawsuit against the postal service.

"They kept it so quiet. They have no right to keep it quiet," he said.

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