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Fifty Cents

Day care center closed in zoning dispute

Operators disagree with application of ordinance

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Marion Phillips and Fran Wolf say there's no place like home. Farmington Hills zoning officials disagree.

"We are caught in the cracks. We are not a day care and we are not a nursery," said Wolf, who with Phillips owns and operates "Images and Imagination" from Phillips' basement in her Woodcreek subdivision home.

Not true, say zoning officials who closed the four-year-old enrichment program for children 3½-years to 6 years old. "They just don't meet the ordinance," said Lee Blizman, Farmington Hills zoning supervisor.

The city's day care ordinance is the culprit for Phillips and Wolf. It regulates — among other things — just where you can offer day care services. Day care for six or less children can be on a subdivision road. For seven or more children with a maximum 12, the center or house must be on a major road.

"They meet the definition of day care in the ordinance," Blizman said. "And they can't be a school because no one is a certified teacher."

PHILLIPS AND Wolf say their popular program — offered to 24 children in two, two-hour blocks of the day — is neither school nor day care. They are not teachers and they don't baby-sit.

"I see this as an enrichment class. I don't use it as day care. And I'm a non-working mom," said Beth Margolin, mother of a 5½-year-old girl

In "Images and Imagination."

"The program teaches children about the world through creativity. It's to teach children how to learn in creative playing time," Phillips said.

Each week is a different theme for the kids. "We take pretend trips around the world. Or we pretend we're something at the bottom of the ocean," Phillips said. "In Mexico, where I am, from kids are not pushed like they are here. They have no time to be children here."

The women are state-licensed as a day care center for 12 children. They did it "because we wanted to be legal from the beginning. We wanted parents to know we are OK," Wolf said.

But no one at the state or local level told them they needed a city license to operate their program from Phillips' house. In fact, the pair met with zoning officials in Farmington Hills to see what they needed to do to move to another facility — if they could find one.

"Nobody at that time told us we were doing something wrong in this house," Phillips said.

Blizman, however, says the two weren't told because they didn't tell her they were already operating in Woodcreek. "And the state doesn't make it their business to inform people of city requirements."

ALL WAS QUIET until a neighbor complained about traffic by Phillips' house. The man told the Zoning

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SHARON LAMERZ/Staff photographer

Sitting in the Box-A-Vision isn't unusual for Fran Wolf (left) and Marion Phillips of Farmington Hills. From the cardboard television, they tell stories and present puppet shows for children ages 3½-to-6 years in the "Images and Imagination" program. The city closed the program because officials say it's a day care center on a residential road.

Projected cuts from Lansing worry schools

By Tim Richard and Casey Hahn
staff writers

Farmington educators say they could lose up to \$9.8 million two years from now if the worst case scenario occurs in Lansing this week.

"This continuation of raiding school districts with this kind of money... is unimaginable," said school Superintendent Michael Flanagan, who has voiced his ongoing frustration with the debate in Lansing over the school finance issue and its impact here.

The \$9.8 million loss would be in the school fiscal year 1993-1994. "We had to lay off 150 employees with \$6 million" (worth of cutbacks in 1990), he added. "Do the math in your head for \$10 million."

Under the best conditions, he added, the Farmington district would still lose \$2.4 million. That would be in addition to the \$5 mil-

lion plus the district lost in 1990 when the state recaptured that amount.

THE 1992 state school aid bill is expected to come out of committee tomorrow and go to the full Senate on Wednesday. If approved, it will then move to the state House. Political observers say there is also a strong core of support in both the Senate and House for the measure, which would attempt to equalize school spending between rich and poor districts.

If signed into law, the bill would recapture more categorical aid, hand over bills to local districts for the employer's share of Social Security — previously paid in full by the state — and keep a tax base sharing plan which takes half a district's new commercial tax growth.

For Farmington, the bill, in its current language, would eat up the

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Residents rankled by blight in southeast Farmington Hills

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Iris Ranesbottom says she's convinced Farmington Hills officials don't care about blight in Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights.

"Because our homes don't go for \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000, they don't care. That's my opinion. They are not taking us seriously," said Ranesbottom, secretary of the Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association.

Ranesbottom and other residents remain concerned about continuing code and zoning violations in their southeast Farmington Hills neighborhoods, despite the use of a code enforcement officer — specifically in their area — for almost two years, who is paid partially with federal block grant money.

"We expect the same degree of enforcement that is throughout the city without the use of Community Development Block Grant funds," Ranesbottom said.

The 18-year Old Town resident says she is offended by Mayor Jonathan Grant's statements recently about code and zoning problems following a March 28 tour of a small section of Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights.

"While more needs to be done, it is clear from my assessment of the situation, some of the comments portrayed in the March 16, 1992, letter (from Ranesbottom) are in fact misleading," Grant said.

Homeowners told the Hills council in March that violations continue at an alarming rate. Flat bed trucks and trailers in yards, unauthorized berms, and boats sitting in rights-of-way are among the problems.

IN NO UNCERTAIN terms, Ranesbottom told the council in March that violations continue at an alarming rate. Flat bed trucks and trailers in yards, unauthorized berms, and boats sitting in rights-of-way are among the problems.

"The city of Farmington Hills and the administration sends inept, unqualified personnel to enforce the zoning ordinance of the city," Ranesbottom said in a March letter.

Ranesbottom sent that letter to the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Detroit and Washington, D.C., as well as to federal lawmakers. "Right now I've not decided how to deal with the city."

Grant acknowledged that problems remain in the area. But he is annoyed with residents' comments about city staff.

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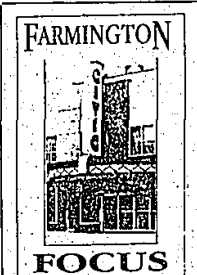
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Out of the blocks

During a recent Farmington High-North Farmington track meet, Farmington High runners happily push a cart full of starting blocks to the starting line. The Falcon runners are (from left) Shelley Moran, Ellen Barlett, Alicia Sobel and Jessica Rau.



SHARON LAMERZ/Staff photographer



ATTENTION, all who apply: The Oakland Livingston Humana Senior Agency will distribute commodity food — including applesauce, butter, flour, peanut butter, pork, raisins and rice — to eligible people on Tuesday, April 21, at St. Alexander's Catholic Church, 27835 Silwassee, Farmington Hills.

Anyone who is "income eligible" and is not registered should bring Social Security cards of household members and photo identification in order to receive food. For more information, call OLHSA at 858-5139.

HEAR YE! Hear ye! The Farmington Historical Society will meet at 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 22, at the Farmington Community Library, Liberty and State streets in downtown Farmington.

Jean Fox, former Farmington Hills councilwoman and noted author and historian, will talk about the Elmwood Cemetery, where eminent Detroiters and Michiganders have been buried.

The public is invited to attend.

ARBOR WEEK is coming up — it's always the third week of April in Michigan — and of course the Farmington Beautification Committee is planning a tree.

The Bradford pear tree will be planted at the gazebo on Grand River near the Farmington Place Apartments at 10 a.m., Thursday, April 23.

Arbor Day/Week, by the way, was started more than a century ago by J. Sterling Morton, who believed that "everyone is responsible for wise stewardship of the Earth," said a Beautification Committee official.

APPLAUSE, please: the Farmington Area Arts Commission has announced the 1992 recipients of the Artist-in-Residence and Distinguished Service to the Arts awards.

"This year, like every year, the contributions to the arts and accomplishments of all the nominees were impressive," said Deborah Grant, chairwoman of the Artist-in-Residence committee.

"We're fortunate to have so many thoughtful volunteers and talented artists living in the Farmington area."

The FAAC award recipients for 1992 are:

- Evaritha "Eve" Samra of Farmington, the artist-in-residence. Samra won more than 30 artist's awards. She is a charter member of the Farmington Art Foundation, a member of the Farmington Artists Club and Visual Arts Club of Livonia since 1968.
- Diane Mancinelli of Farmington Hills, the Distinguished Service to the Arts winner. Mancinelli is a dance teacher at Henry Ford Community College and choreographer of numerous musical and dance productions.

The awards will be made at the FAAC reception 3-5 p.m. Sunday, April 26, at the Farmington Community Center, 24705 Farmington Road.

MEMORY LANE — From the April 24, 1992, issue of the Farmington Enterprise: Farmington City Manager James Tennant presented a proposed budget of \$137,840 to the city council. The record budget was \$18,000 over last year's figure.