

Hills holds firm on solicitor fees

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills City Council upheld its views on solicitors Monday after a Greenpeace representative complained that city fees are unfair.

Greenpeace, the international environmental group known for its activist, "Save the Whales" stance and its push for nuclear disarmament, challenged the solicitor's system locally last month.

Greenpeace complained about the new Farmington Hills mandate that requires each solicitor in a canvassing group to pay a \$15 fee.

Lisa Hollingsworth, the Greenpeace canvass director, complained in June that no other community charged this much and that the fees are usually waived or greatly reduced.

But Monday councilmembers — with the backing of police Chief William Dwyer, city clerk Kathryn Dermen, and a few letters and telephone calls from citizens — decided to keep the new mandate status quo with no waiver for groups like Greenpeace, the Michigan Citizens Lobby or PIRGIM.

Greenpeace will have to pay \$600 for 40 canvassers.

"I don't know what we will do next," said Hollingsworth Tuesday from her Ann Arbor office. She again reiterated that the council's deci-

sion restricts the group's free speech.

"Each household on its own can decide if they want us to come by," Hollingsworth said. "We have a right to free speech that has been upheld by the (U.S.) Supreme Court."

Hollingsworth wasn't present at Monday's council meeting.

However, she forwarded a 1978 opinion by Attorney General Frank Kelley, which states neither the state or its municipalities can impose a tax or fee on the activity of canvassing door-to-door, just as requiring canvassers to be residents or fingerprinting canvassers is not allowed.

City attorney John Donohue noted that Kelley's opinion was dated and that the Hills fees are not intended to be a revenue producer and are strictly to cover administrative costs.

City Manager William Costick said that there is a problem in keeping large groups of solicitors registered.

"I'm here to speak against a reduction (in the solicitor's fee)," said resident Ken Perrin. "We would be subsidizing that organization if we reduce it. I'm appealing to you never to reduce the rates charged to these people."

At the June council meeting, Donohue said the administrative fees charged in the Hills were in keeping with those charged in surrounding communities.

However, clerks in Farmington, Livonia, Novi,

Troy and West Bloomfield Township said that they do not charge Greenpeace, specifically, a fee.

Donohue said that groups like Greenpeace fall into a "gray area" of classification whether they represent political free speech or a political organization.

The new Hills ordinance requires that each solicitor be photographed and approved by the police department. The photo is laminated and attached to a clip.

"It is difficult to determine whether our present fee structure operates to deter a group such as Greenpeace, while not deterring another similar organization," Donohue said.

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi reiterated his views that residents can place "no solicitors" signs on their doors if they don't wish to be contacted by groups.

"I think our fees are reasonable to access 75,000 people," said councilwoman Nancy Bates.

Councilman Larry Lichtman said that free speech is a "misnomer." The first Amendment requires that Americans support free speech — not subsidize it, he said.

In a memo to Costick, Dwyer said that in 1990, 200 citizens complained about solicitation June-September. Last year that number grew to 342 complaints, for the same time period, Dwyer said.

Let's shake on it



Congratulations: Leonard Kaplan, a Farmington Hills resident and a professor in the College of Education at Wayne State University, is being congratulated by Paula Wood, interim dean, at a recent reception honoring Kaplan as the new president of the Association of Teacher Educators. "Education and the Family," a book edited by Kaplan, was published last February.

Hills panel asked to keep eye on lawn chemical laws

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Mayor Jon Grant wants to monitor state legislation that would regulate the use of granular and liquid lawn chemical applications.

He wants the city's toxic and hazardous waste committee to meet and study the issue and then report back to Council.

The committee has been inactive since it rendered its opinion on the fate of an industrial-research-office parcel rezoning last year.

"There's no clear consensus on the

council on this issue," Grant said.

The issue has been dealt with at all levels of government, according to Steve Brock, assistant to the city manager.

"A few municipalities in our area have enacted ordinances dealing with the application of chemicals," Brock said. "In fact, the Milford case is a well-publicized one that went to the Supreme Court."

The city of Milford requires registration, posting and notice by commercial users of pesticides.

Public Act No. 171 (1976) and Public Act No. 449 enacted in 1988 were intended to improve the management and regula-

tion of pesticide use in Michigan, Brock said. A House bill to build upon Public Act 449 has drawn criticism by some who feel home rule is in danger of being usurped by state law, Brock said.

Senate Bill 636, which passed the Senate was in the Agricultural Committee chaired by Representative Thomas Hickner of Bay City, in June, Brock said.

The issue will probably not be taken up until this fall, Brock added.

He suggested that residents who have difficulty with these lawn applications speak to their neighbors about the possi-

bility of receiving prior notice of when these applications will take place.

Janet Emmert, a Farmington Hills resident, recently wrote Council, the Farmington Observer and legislators in May asking for an ordinance that would set some guidelines on these applications.

"I am tired of hearing from officials that we're 'butting up against big business,'" Emmert said. "Everyone would do well to realize the dangers involved when hiring a company to maintain their lawns. Just recently, Dave Wade, a pesticide expert with the Michigan Department of Agriculture sent out a warning about the herbicide 2-4-

D which causes cancer in dogs and may be harmful to humans as well. He suggests you ask to see product labels and material data safety sheets when contracting a lawn company."

In the meantime, Emmert thinks she has a better idea. She bought 1,500 ladybugs and let them loose in her yard to eat bugs. She uses horse manure in her gardens.

"In a global effort to save this planet, we had better look in our own backyards for answers to this troublesome problem," Emmert said.

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