

Resident says city's bite worse than dogs' bark

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Hills City Council went to the dogs — and just in time.

During Monday's regular meeting, council members found themselves in the awkward situation of explaining to Farmington Road residents why the city planned to build a bike path they didn't want.

That's when Jennifer Jean Yoell came to the rescue . . . well, sort of.

It seems Yoell's two dogs have been too loud for her neighbors on Astor, in the Nine Mile/Middlebelt area. While she understands their concern, Yoell said she thinks being served a subpoena at midnight by a Hills police officer was ridiculous.

And worse yet, she has had to appear in criminal court to face charges that could eventually land her in jail.

"Do they (neighbors) have nothing else to do?" the New York native said. "This is called: 'Get a life!'"

Yoell said she received six months probation over complaints about her dogs barking. She said she needs the dogs for

■ 'There's a snow blower making noise at 7:30 in the morning. So, somebody shouldn't get out of their driveway?'

Jennifer Jean Yoell
Farmington Hills

protection. And barking is one way in which the canines protect her. Yoell said there are noisy kids and other dogs in her neighborhood, but she hasn't raised a fuss.

"If I wanted to, I could fine everyone in my neighborhood," she said. "There's a snow blower making noise at 7:30 in the morning. So, somebody shouldn't get out of their driveway?"

Although city attorney John Donohue took the complaint seriously, he and most others at the meeting saw some humor in the situation.

"A lot of cities are working to make this a civil infraction rather than a misdemeanor," Donohue said. "This came about because some people would leave their dogs in the house from 7 a.m. to 6 at night and they were real barking. This came about in the early '60s."

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi said after the meeting that there is a serious basis for complaints about barking dogs, in part, because there are so many.

"I've noticed a lot of burglar alarms and dogs," he said. Councilman Terry Sever, in keeping with the other citizen comments, asked if Yoell had a sidewalk.

Yoell said when she appeared in court, she had to laugh at a docket which included assaults, drunken driving, robbery and her case — "dog barking."

"I will walk the streets," she said in exasperation with her arms stretched wide.

To which Donohue responded with a straight face: "We also have an ordinance against that." Not to be outdone, Yoell had an answer: "Well, I won't do it on Farmington Road."

Laughs and applause.

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would be built 50 feet up from the curb onto residential lots was not true. He added that the city had planned to meet with property owners before anything was done south of Heritage Park.

"We have never built a sidewalk in that fashion (50 feet onto property)," Costick said. "I don't know where you get that from."

Assistant city manager Steve Brock distributed a letter at the meeting that had been sent to homeowners along the proposed path Sept. 3. The letter, from Costick, said the city planned to meet with affected property owners before any work was done.

The proposed bike path is planned in three stages:

■ The first stage leads from Woodland Hills Park to the bridge over I-696 and from the bridge to Heritage Park. Construction is scheduled to begin in October, and property owners have already signed on for that phase, Costick said.

■ The second phase involves improving the approaches to the bridge and building the path there. That phase of construction is scheduled to begin next spring or summer. Federal grant money of \$340,000, administered by the

■ 'I left with a major headache and not a lot of information . . . I have no confidence that nothing definite has been decided.'

Janice Sutcliffe
Farmington Road resident

state, and city matching funds of \$100,000 have been set aside for the first two phases.

■ The third phase, paid for with \$50,000 in federal money and an equal match in city money, would begin no sooner than next spring.

Councilman Terry Sever said the city should not be afraid to give up the grant money if the project isn't right for the community.

"The opportunity to get a grant should not determine our sidewalk program," he said. "We have a lot of homework to do."

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi said the city should make sure residents are heard from before doing anything. Councilman Ben Marks agreed.

"People should be notified before somebody goes out there with a shovel," Marks said.

Councilman Jon Grant said he thought input was important, but

not before the city had a definite plan in mind. And mayor pro tem Larry Lichtman said that sidewalks add to the safety of Hills residents. An alternative suggested by several Farmington Road residents to build the path along Power Road would not serve that purpose, he said.

"We're concerned about the safety of kids on bikes and joggers," he said. "People won't go along Power Road; they'll just stay on Farmington."

Lichtman added that although there has been some opposition to most of the city's sidewalk projects, most have been supported in the end.

Costick said he will meet with residents and discuss the planned path, but added that because the city is busy finishing several other projects, no engineering could be done for the last phase of the path until 1994.

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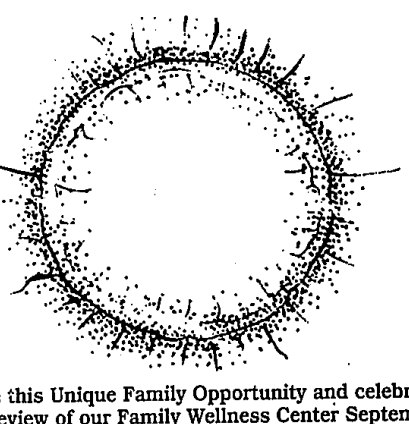
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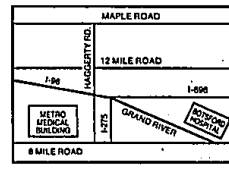
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