

Litigation from page 1A

The two sides met over Ashley Ponke's guardianship and the appointment of Dennis Lutz as a conservator Feb. 9 in Oakland County Probate Court.

"I'm not going to give anything to this guy (Raymond Ponke)," Gagnluk said. "This guy apparently wants a portion of the property and (to) go over to him."

"My feeling is you can't benefit from killing somebody. He killed his wife . . . I guess the easiest way to win a divorce case is to kill your wife."

Temporary custody of Ashley Ponke was granted to the Tucker family of Oxford. The plan is for her to move in with the Lutz family in Livonia, Gagnluk said.

The lawsuit in circuit court is designed to freeze any assets held by Raymond Ponke, Gagnluk said.

Raymond Ponke's attorney says the legal action as opportunistic. Ron Chapman said it's an attempt to sap his client's resources to prevent him from having a proper defense.

Raymond Ponke's primary assets are contained in a union pension, Chapman said. He doesn't know how much is in it, though.

"If you take that away, how does this poor person hire the experts to help defend him? You don't," Chapman said. "If you can't defend yourself in a criminal trial, what happens in a civil trial? You lose that one, too."

"Then guess what happens? You have great movie rights," Chapman said his client is not objecting to temporary guardianship, but to permanent guardianship and his parental rights being terminated.

"I think the timing is too quick," Chapman said. "People are jumping in, thinking they are doing the right thing, but there's no need to do it."

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

With white paper in hand, Farmington-area residents are quick-stepping into the city clerk's office to make sure they're on the cutting edge when it comes to homestead property tax credits.

Homeowners need to fill out and return a form in order to receive their Michigan Homestead tax credit as mandated by the state. The deadline is March 1.

The short time span has many worried, especially those who've

read reports of forms without postage ending up in the "dead letter box" in some post offices.

That's not the case in Farmington or Farmington Hills.

"I just decided to bring it in rather than mailing it just to make sure I have it in on time," said Farmington resident Mike Balle, handing his form to city clerk and treasurer Patsy Cantrell.

Cantrell said residents are upset with having to fill out the form along with the short deadline. Added to the confusion was the delay in the state getting forms out.

Most residents received theirs last week.

Said Cantrell, "It's been a very disruptive process. It's not something we had planned for in our workload."

Darlene Frizzell in the Farmington Hills Assessor's office said there has been a steady stream of residents dropping off forms in person. Several voiced their displeasure with the process.

"It's ridiculous," said Farmington Hills resident Allen Bidel. "It's unconscionable for the Legislature to set a deadline like that."

Added another Farmington

Hills resident Dr. Paul Pensler: "It's not an efficient way of doing it. I guess they have their reasons for doing it that way. Perhaps it's a way to save money."

On March 15, voters will decide how much a property tax cut they will get.

The ballot plan, known as the sales tax option, calls for a hold-harmless millage of 16.24 in Farmington. The statutory plan, which includes raising the state income tax, would have 8.42 hold-harmless mills. One mill equals \$1 for every \$1,000 of state equalized valuation.

Exemption forms taxing for some residents

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington and Farmington Hills city assessor offices have looked like the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange lately.

That's because residents are coming in to turn in a homestead tax exemption form due by March 1. But the problem is that most people are confused about what they need to fill out on the form that will apply to the state's new tax system. Whether the March 15 ballot proposal is passed or not, the new form will be used for the homestead tax exemption.

"This has created quite a lot of

confusion," said Hills city assessor Dean Babb.

Babb, who said his office has received more than 5,000 of the 24,000 forms that were mailed out Feb. 8, answered questions at the Farmington Hills City Council meeting Monday night.

"Most people have gotten the message" that they need to fill out the form and return it to their city assessor's office, Babb said. Although some people are returning the forms in the envelopes they came in, the county is going to pick up the postage, he added.

Farmington city clerk/treasurer Patsy Cantrell said about half of the forms sent out had been re-

turned in Farmington.

Most forms already have most of the information on them and require only the Social Security number and signature of the property owner, Babb said. But that, he said, seemed to be a problem for some people.

"We've had people who don't want to put down their Social Security number," Babb said.

Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, also attended the council meeting and said residents shouldn't worry about giving the information.

"When you file for your state and federal taxes your Social Security number has to be on

there," she said.

A lot of residents were confused about their status because they were buying or selling property, Babb said.

"It's based on property they owned as of Dec. 31, 1993," he said.

The short time period (less than a month) from the time the forms were mailed until the time they are due hasn't helped, said councilman Terry Sever.

"I'm hoping that we can get the deadline extended," he said.

A bill has been introduced to extend the deadline, but it has not been acted on, Dolan said.

Dolan expands local office hours until vote

State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, will increase her district office hours in Farmington and Farmington Hills to twice a week until the March 15 special election on school financing.

Dolan or her staff will meet with constituents every Monday and Friday until just before the election.

Information on the ballot proposal and statutory school funding plan, property taxes, homestead exemptions forms, and the millage change to Farmington,

Walled Lake and Clarencville school districts will be available.

Residents also can pick up taxpayer guides and state tax forms. She will resume her regular schedule after March 15.

District hours and locations are:

■ 9 a.m. to noon Friday, Feb. 18, 25 and March 4 and 11, at Farmington City Hall in the city council chamber, 23600 Liverty.

■ 1-4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18, 25 and March 4 and 11, at Farmington Hills City Hall in the city manager's room, 31555 11 Mile.

■ 6:30-7:15 p.m. Monday, Feb. 21 and March 7, at Farmington City Hall in the city council chamber, 6:30-7:15 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 28 and March 14, at Farmington Hills City Hall in the city manager's room.

"The historic education reforms passed last year by the Legislature have generated many questions concerning property taxes and school finance," said Dolan, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. "To answer the flood of inquiries, I want to make myself as available

as possible. No appointments are necessary and all meetings are in formal. I hope local residents will stop and let me know what is on their mind."

The 37th District lawmaker added that much of the printed material at these meetings also can be obtained through some area subdivision presidents, in addition to libraries and city halls.

For more information, call Dolan's Lansing office at (517) 373-1733.

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