

November ballot question: Directly elect Hills mayor?

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

After the second lengthy public discussion in as many weeks, the Farmington Hills City Council decided by a 5-2 margin to ask voters to decide in November if they want to directly elect their mayor.

The City Council currently elects a mayor for a one-year term. The proposal would ask voters if they want to elect a mayor for a two-year term with a two-term limit.

"The issue is: Do we give residents the chance to decide whether they want to elect a mayor?" said Councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio, who voted with the majority. "I don't understand what everybody is so afraid of."

For the second week, several residents came forward to protest putting what one man called "a Trojan horse" on the November ballot.

But unlike previous discussions, there was some support for the idea from the audience.

"You have to be blind, dumb and stupid to think there is not politics in the selection of mayor," said Marilee Kurzeja, a veteran council watcher and Old Towne resident.

Referring to the council's system "rotating" the mayor's position,

■ 'The issue is: Do we give residents the chance to decide whether they want to elect a mayor? I don't understand what everybody is so afraid of.'

Councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio

Kurzeja said that system was "broke" and had led to political bickering and the denial of the job to council members Joe Alkateeb, Joan Dudley and Joanne Smith. "It has to be stopped," Kurzeja said.

Although most citizens who spoke were opposed to the idea, council members Oliverio, Jon Grant, Nancy Bates, Terry Sever and Aldo Vagnozzi were for the idea. Grant, Bates, Sever and Vagnozzi have all served as mayor. Mayor Larry Lichtman and Smith opposed the measure, which had to pass by two-thirds to be placed on the Nov. 1 ballot.

"There's no better way to be involved in government than to vote," Bates said. "We understand what 'no' means. Let's settle it on the ballot once and for all."

Grant, who agreed that the job of mayor required different skills, said the job required "stronger leadership" than the current, one-

year term allows.

"Change can improve things," Grant said.

Sever said rumors that he had pushed for the proposal so he could be mayor were flattering, but not true.

Vagnozzi, who is the latest council member to endorse a directly elected mayor, said the change would not provide a "power base" for anyone as some had suggested in comparing such a move with cities like Detroit and Dearborn, cities with strong-mayor governments.

Smith suggested that if the council wanted to pursue the issue, it could appoint a committee rather than rushing the issue.

Lichtman said he feared a separately elected mayor could create friction among the council, mayor and city staff.

"This city government is accessible to the average resident," Lichtman said. "My concern is that this may change that."

Fourmidable Group names assistant controller

Sharon Mitchelson has been named assistant controller for promotions at The Fourmidable Group, a Farmington Hills-based property management company.

Mitchelson, 30, will supervise the processing department for accounts receivable and accounts payable at Fourmidable's corpo-

rate office in Farmington Hills. Mitchelson also will provide accounting support for Fourmidable's community offices.

Soon after joining Fourmidable in 1991 as an account supervisor, Mitchelson was recognized as "Employee of the Month." Before joining Fourmidable, she was an

account supervisor at Tower Bus Company in Mount Clemens for five years.

Mitchelson is a 1985 graduate of Macomb Community College where she earned an associates degree in accounting. She lives in St. Clair Shores.

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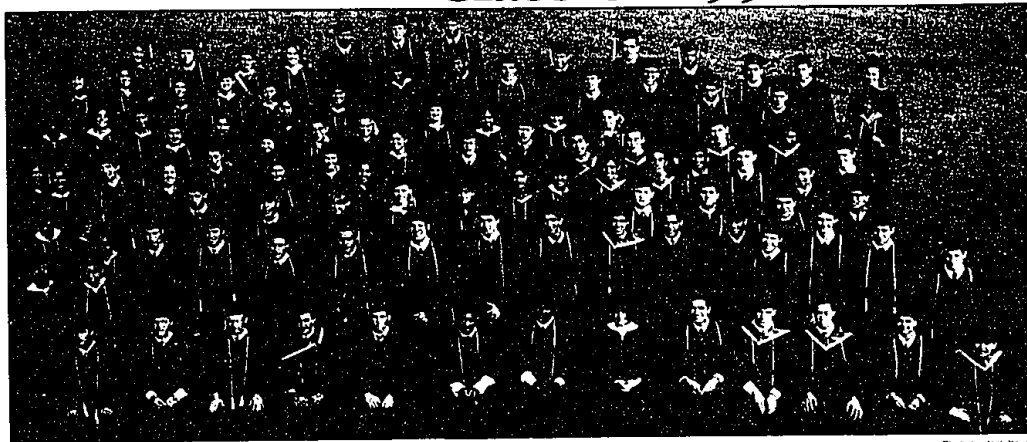
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