



Looking it over: Farmington Hills resident Rob Chapell and his 8-month-old daughter, Amber, look over some political literature at the rally.



Role playing: Aldo Vagnozzi, Farmington Hills councilman, donned colonial duds for Saturday's Old Fashioned Political Rally at Heritage Park.

Candidates, supporters, voters rally in park

BY BILL COUTANT

Although many attending the Old Fashioned Political Rally Saturday at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills were either candidates or their supporters, organizers were pleased with the turnout.

The Farmington Hills Committee to Increase Voter Participation sponsored the rally Saturday afternoon. About 30 candidates running for local, state and national office came to press the flesh and say a few words to advance their cause.

In addition, former Hills Mayor or Jean Fox and current council members Joanne Smith and Cheryl Oliverio (who aren't up for re-election) read the Declara-

tion of Independence and the Bill of Rights as a reminder of the importance of voting in a democracy.

Hills councilman Aldo Vagnozzi, who was master of ceremonies at the rally, even donned a tri-cornered hat and Jeffersonian attire for the occasion.

But unlike many such events, many candidates tussled with the question of how to involve citizens more in the election process.

Bill Brodhead, a former congressman running for the U.S. Senate, was among those who attended and spoke and said the typical 20 percent turnout in primary elections is "disappointing."

"It's unfortunate," he said.

"They (voters) don't like either the Republican or Democratic candidate in the fall election. The primary is where they can make a crucial decision."

Brodhead, who faces a tough field including Ann Arbor State Sen. Lena Pollock, State Sen. John Kelly and Lansing developer Joel Ferguson (who all spoke at the rally), and Macomb County Prosecutor Carl Marlinga (who attended the rally), said the news media is not as interested in the primaries and that is reflected in the coverage.

The news media is interested in what its readers are interested in and it becomes a vicious circle," he said.

Donn Wolf, 19th District Oakland County commissioner, said

the primary process is important as a "filter" of candidates that are too extreme in either party. Wolf, who faces a primary challenge from Hills resident Sally Osann, spoke of Gov. John Engler, who did not attend.

"Events like this are terrific," Wolf said. "They make people aware of the primary and the issues. For the first time, this is a good turnout."

And as the afternoon passed, people enjoyed refreshments provided by the Jaycees and Team Farmington, talked to candidates, picked up brochures and listened to speakers including Michigan Supreme Court candidate Conrad Mallett Jr.; Oakland County Commissioner David Moffitt (18th District) and

his Democratic challenger David Fernquist; Congressman Joe Knollenberg; State Sen. Debbie Stabenow and State Rep. Lynn Jondahl who are running for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination; Democrat Vicki Barnett, who is challenging State Sen. David Honigman; Marilyn Kelly, running for the court of appeals 2nd District; Sen. Jack Faxon, who currently represents Farmington and Farmington Hills; Rep. Jan Dolan and her GOP primary challenger Andrew Raczkowski, and Democrat challenger Richard Dailey, along with candidates for other state offices and courts.

"This is my third time running for office," said Oakland Circuit Judge Edward Sonnick.

"I can't do much about the people who don't vote. What I can do is try to educate the people who are likely to vote on my record, especially on domestic violence."

Even with the candidates and their backers, there were many who came to listen, and hopefully, get some answers.

"Everybody's been talking about health care," said Marlon Barnes, a Farmington retiree. "I want to find out what they have to say about that."

Barnes, who worked for Allstate Insurance for 40 years, said she was also interested in the career of her congressman, Joe Knollenberg, a former agent with the company.

Ice arena backers lobby to show proposal is cool

BY BILL COUTANT

The thermometer may say 90, but backers of a proposed ice arena are doing all they can to remind voters about games on ice and the fact that Farmington Hills could have a new ice arena — if an Aug. 2 ballot proposal passes.

There are lawn signs in support of the proposed \$6 million project. The Say Yes to the Ice Arena group had literature and a booth at Saturday's political rally at Heritage Park. And a cable TV program Wednesday night sponsored by the League of Women Voters was designed to answer questions about the arena.

"This is crunch month," said Dennis Fitzgerald, Say Yes chairman.

Committee members are talking to senior citizen groups, subdivision associations and anyone who will listen, Fitzgerald said.

"I'm hearing a lot of people who are confused about the ballot language," Fitzgerald, former parks and recreation commission chairman, said. "We have people who are concerned about trees (being cut down) at the park (Founders Sports Park on Eight Mile, where the arena would be built)."

The Farmington City Council approved final ballot language, which reads:

"Shall the City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan, borrow a sum not to exceed Six Million Dollars (\$6,000,000) and issue its general obligation limited tax bonds, within the City Charter tax limit, in one or more series for the purpose of erecting, furnishing, equipping and developing the site for a new multipurpose ice arena to be located at Founders Sports Park. Should this proposal be adopted?"

The proposal calls for either a "yes" or "no" vote.

Another issue that has been brought up is who will have the food and equipment concessions at the arena, Fitzgerald said.

"These issues have not even been discussed yet," he said. "We can't even begin to decide those types of things until the proposal passes."

In fact, a firm that bid on designing drawings of the proposed arena had an employee on the committee that studied building an arena. An Ohio firm was instead hired by the city to complete the drawings and will likely build the facility if voters give approval.

Having architectural drawings available at Wednesday's TV forum would probably go a long way in clearing up concerns about what the facility will have and not have, Fitzgerald said.

"I think that will answer a lot of questions," he said.

Pro-arena group to skate out question-and-answer brochure

The Say Yes to the Ice Arena Committee will be distributing a question-and-answer brochure in the coming weeks.

Here is a sampling:

Q: What kind of facility will it be?

A: There will be two full-sized ice surfaces, a pro shop with skate rental, a family style restaurant, locker rooms and other amenities.

Q: Will the ice surfaces operate year round?

A: One will. The other will be melted down for a few months a year and devoted to "dry floor" uses, such as rollerblading, basketball and volleyball.

Q: Where will the arena be located?

A: On a portion of the Founders Sports Park, an 80-acre, city-owned park on the north side of Eight Mile Road between Gill

and Halsted.

Q: How much will the arena cost to build?

A: Not more than \$6 million.

Q: How will the city pay for the arena?

A: The city will finance the construction of the arena through the sale of municipal bonds. The bond debt will be retired through the revenue generated by arena operations. With enough revenue, there would be no cost to taxpayers.

Q: If the arena is profitable, what will the city do with the profits?

A: Arena profits will go for improvements, maintenance and operation of Founders Sports Park, as well as other park property owned by Farmington Hills.

Q: What if the arena operates at a loss? Will taxpayers have to

cover the loss?

A: Some skeptics have suggested the arena could lose as much as \$100,000 per year for the first few years. If this is true, it could cost the average taxpaying household \$2.88 each year of a loss.

Q: Why do we need an ice arena?

A: In both the 1988 and 1991 parks and recreation master plans, community surveys revealed strong interest in ice skating as a form of recreation in Farmington Hills. This interest was confirmed again in 1993 by a scientific marketing survey, conducted for Farmington Hills by the University of Michigan, which revealed an even stronger acceptance of a community ice arena.

The committee is also operating a hot line for further questions: 948-5168.



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Southfield Polo Team vs. Palm Beach Polo Team

on Saturday, July 16, 1994, at 2 p.m. (Rain date: Sunday, July 17)

at Duns Scotus, Evergreen and Nine Mile Roads (parking in the Southfield Civic Center north lot, Evergreen and 10 1/2 Mile, with shuttle service to the polo site)

Tickets: \$6 at the gate; \$5 in advance • \$1 children 12 and under Advance tickets at Southfield City Hall main reception desk; weekdays 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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