



Coming down? The Farmington City Council isn't sure it wants to approve a restaurant owner's plan to bring the lofty Big Boy down to ground level.

Down Boy?

Should Big Boy stay up or go?

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

At 11-feet tall by 6-feet wide, he'd make a great basketball center.

Farmington City Council, though, is not sure he should be the center of attention on Farmington Road.

What does the Big Boy think? Well, he just seems to smile through it all.

George Durany, owner of the Big Boy on Farmington Road, wants to take the statue of the cherubic, checkered-bedecked burger dude off a 41-foot tall sign and place it in front of his business. The older sign will be replaced by a new one 19-feet high.

"I want something out there that is friendly and inviting," Durany said. "The Big Boy statue is friendly and inviting."

Durany needs a sign variance, though. Council is reluctant to grant one, citing city's new sign ordinance that considers the Big Boy figure a secondary sign.

Council said it wants to take a closer look, tabling the matter until its Sept. 19 meeting.

"I have real trouble trying to visualize this," Councilman

Bill Hartsock said.

"There's no recourse after granting a variance for an 11-by-6-foot sign, three feet away from the sidewalk."

Debate over the Big Boy figure consumed a considerable amount of time at the Sept. 6 meeting.

The Big Boy is the cornerstone of an ongoing restaurant renovation, Durany said. He wants to convey his business as a neighborhood eatery.

Other Big Boy restaurants in the area have made similar changes with their corporate symbol.

Council members want to see how other Big Boy statues look on ground level.

Another council concern is upkeep of the statue. That's not going to be a problem, Durany said.

"It would be the dumbest thing I could do. It would be worse than letting my building go, letting my business logo go," Durany said.

Durany appeared to grow impatient as the discussion dragged out. The business has complied with city codes, he said.

Also, the new 19-foot sign

comes within the sign ordinance. The existing 41-foot tall one is grandfathered in, and doesn't have to be changed.

Several community events are planned to coincide with a grand reopening in October, Durany said. One is a fundraiser Oct. 12 for Farmington Families in Action.

Durany balked at one proposal, which would've allowed a variance for two years. The problem, Durany said, is council could later refuse the renewal request after having already paid money to have the Big Boy moved.

"The problem you have is council can simply solve its problem tonight by denying your variance," said city attorney John Donohue.

Council members complimented Durany's efforts in the renovating the restaurant and planning community-minded events. They also assured they are trying work with him on what Hartsock described "is really special exception."

Added Mayor Arnie Campbell: "Everyone has to feel comfortable with the decision. . . . We're pro business."

Council faces showdown over Timbercrest plans

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The winner of the war of attrition over a proposed development at 12 Mile and Middlebelt in Farmington Hills could be determined tonight by who is left standing.

The city council met with developer Gary Jonna and his attorney Bob Carson in a study session Thursday in hopes of coming closer to a compromise on a planned unit development for the project, known as Timbercrest.

But, as in other meetings over the past 13 months, it was unclear by meeting's end what the next move would be.

Carson outlined a modified proposal that would include 163 single family houses that would have frontages from 70 feet to 85 feet, including six acres for a corner shopping center with hour restrictions for the next seven years, and other improvements.

Under the latest plan, the city would buy 14 acres of wooded property between I-696 and the Greenacres subdivision and pay half of the off-site road, sewer and other improvements, which could cost \$700,000 or more.

Councilman Jon Grant said the entire negotiating process had been "difficult." He, like many residents who oppose the project, said another shopping center was not what the city needed.

"I don't think we need any more commercial in this city," he said.

And although some council members agree that some type of mall or commercial property will

be built at the corner, coming to an agreement with Jonna on what exactly that would be has been elusive.

"The grocery store is the biggest complaint I hear," said councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio.

Councilman Terry Sever said a survey of residents in the area of the proposed Timbercrest development showed the same concern. About 30 percent of those asked had returned the surveys to Sever, and including a grocery store in the new shopping center was opposed by about 84 percent of those responding.

Sever said Friday that he was not sure whether the council could find enough reasons to table a vote on the proposal for another week to allow more time to study a compromise.

"I would prefer to vote it up or down," he said. "There's been too much stretching and not enough give. My experience is that 11th-hour negotiations don't turn out that well. It seems like the grocery store is the big hangup."

Councilwoman Nancy Bates said she had heard some encouraging ideas at the session and would like more information from Carson about the price to the city of buying down zoning or purchasing the corner that had been intended as a shopping center.

"I think a great deal of time has been invested in this," she said. "I don't want to quit before we're done."

But Bates said another week was reasonable only if there was real progress. At the study session she pointed out that Kmart had just announced plans to lay off 10 percent of its work force

and close several stores. Bates said opening a large super market could court that type of disaster in the city.

Sharon Stein, chairwoman of Voters' Voice, a group of residents that opposes the project, said she was encouraged that the council would resolve the issues Monday.

"I think they're going to vote this down," she said, adding that residents opposing the project had filled council chambers and meeting rooms in the seven public meetings on the project beginning when it first came to the planning commission last August.

"This is getting to be a real imposition on our time," she said. Jonna said he was encouraged by Thursday's session and believes the council will probably table any action, at least until Sept. 19.

"With the movement toward some type of compromise plan, it would be inconsistent to now vote it down," Jonna said. "After 13 months, what's one more week?"

A version of the development that included 180 houses and a shopping center on 9 acres was approved by a 4-3 vote in June. Mayor Larry Lichtman and Mayor pro tem Joanne Smith, who are still for the development, had voted along with Grant and Bates for approval. Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi, Oliverio and Sever had voted against. Grant and Bates could decide the issue.

The council meets at 7:30 p.m. for its regular meeting. Reconsideration of the development is on the agenda.

Residents want streets back

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Residents living across from Farmington High School have "permitted" themselves in order to park on their streets. They hope it deters students from doing the same.

Up to 30 vehicles driven by students park on Lakeway, Valley View and Prospect on school days. As a result, residents contend driveways are blocked, traffic gets snarled, and students loiter and litter.

And the residents are fed up. Farmington City Council OK'd a Traffic and Safety Board recommendation to make the area a residential permit parking district at its Sept. 6 meeting.

Residents said they'd prefer to have permit parking, even if they have to pay \$20 fee proposed by the city.

"It's convenient for (students)," said Lakeway resident Diane Allen. "If we take this away from

them, they'll park in the school parking lot or they'll find another way to get to school."

Council members see permit parking as a temporary solution, though. They want to form an ad hoc committee with school officials, residents and council, to stall student parking there.

Council also wants Farmington Public Schools to pay for additional signs and permits.

"I don't think it's fair for the residents to pick up the tab for this," Councilman Bill Hartsock said.

In the past, Farmington police have issued tickets for loitering and smoking to students who congregated there.

A representative from Farmington High said students park on side streets so they can leave early undetected. School parking lot exits are closed off during classes to thwart skipping.

"We support anything the

council decides," said teacher Thomas Krupka, who was representing the school administration at the meeting.

Residents who circulated a petition said no one from the schools attended their meetings.

Farmington High principal Jim Myers said he was aware of only one meeting, which came during summer break.

Nonetheless, Myers said school officials are willing to meet with the city and residents in order to find a solution.

"I'd like to get some of my students involved and get their ideas," Myers said. "It's a reflection on them and a reflection on the community. . . . We're all in this together."

Myers said he was unclear, though, on council's request that the district pay to put up signs and permits on city streets.

"I'll have to speak to (City manager) Frank Lauhoff about that," Myers said. "We pay for signs we put up on our property.

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ON THE AGENDA

Below are highlights from the agendas of meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington Hills City Council City Council Chambers
7:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 12

Agenda items include:

- Consideration of enactment of a amended sign ordinance.
- Reconsideration of a Planned Unit Development plan for the Timbercrest project of Farmington Hills located at the southeast corner of 12 Mile and Middlebelt roads.
- Consideration of approval of appointments to boards and commissions.
- Consideration of reintroduction

tion of an ordinance to amend the city code regarding false alarms to provide a new tax lien collection procedure and approval of fee adjustments.

■ Consideration of designating voting delegate and alternate voting delegate for the annual Congress of Cities, Dec. 1-4, 1994, in Minneapolis, Minn.

■ Consideration of approval of award of bid for renovations at the Farmington Hills Activities Center.

■ Consideration of approval of use of conversion of Dublin Hall at the Farmington Hills Activities Center for gymnasium uses.

■ Consideration of approval of award of contract to perform

management audit services.

Farmington Board of Education
Lewis Schulman Center, 489-3300
8 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 13

Agenda items include:

- Curriculum and school reports.
- Update on summer renovation projects.
- Awarding of bids for swim timing equipment and scoreboard for North Farmington High.
- Overview of board retreat.
- Study session and regular meeting format.
- Second reading of separate policies regarding sexual harassment and research in the schools.