

Voice, Citizens make marks on election day

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

One of the hottest issues at the polls last week wasn't even on the ballot.

Members of groups supporting and opposing the recall of six Farmington Hills council members were active at several polling places Tuesday — and sometimes on less-than-congenial terms.

Mayor Larry Lichtman, one of the six targeted for recall, said there was some "bickering" at some of the polling places between members of Voters' Voice, which is pushing for the recall, and members of Citizens to Save Our City, which opposes the recall.

Voters' Voice members, who are pushing the recall of Lichtman and council members Joanne Smith, Terry Sever, Cheryl Oliverio, Nancy Bates and Jon

Grant, circulated recall petitions and handed out packets with a "fact sheet," a recall petition instruction sheet, recall petitions and a return mail envelope. Members of Citizens to Save Our City passed out their own pamphlets praising the accomplishments of the city council.

Robert Gardon, a retired engineer and Voters' Voice member, said a man from Citizens exchanged "good-natured banter" while they disagreed. And Sever, who came to Fairview Early Childhood Center in the morning, exchanged pleasantries.

"Terry was very genial," Gardon said. "And Bernie, the fellow that was there in the morning, was a nice guy. People in Washington could have learned something."

But Gardon said the afternoon camaraderie turned sour as two

members of Citizens, including Nancy Bates' husband Charles, harassed Gardon and his wife Suzanne along with other Voters' Voice members. Bates said there were no problems as far as he was concerned and declined further comment.

Dennis Fitzgerald, who supports the council members, said he witnessed some rude behavior by Voters' Voice members who were keeping close watch on Citizens.

Sue Rose, assistant city clerk, said the clerk's office only heard two complaints about problems at the polls. In one instance, a voter complained that Voters' Voice members were too close to the polling place (within 100 feet). And another complaint involved "rude behavior," she said.

Judge could vote down request for referendum on development

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Even if residents get enough signatures to force a referendum on a controversial development, a judge could end their quest, the Farmington Hills city attorney has said.

Last month, the Farmington Hills City Council OK'd Timbercrest, a commercial and residential development at 12 Mile and Middlebelt roads. But nearby residents called for a citywide vote on the project and began collecting signatures on petitions.

The legality of a referendum will have to be determined in court if the group circulating those petitions gets the required number of signatures.

City Attorney John Donohue said he has consistently told the city council and members of Voters' Voice, the group opposing the development, that in his opinion the city council's approval of the 92-acre development is not subject to referendum because it is an administrative act, not a legislative act.

Normally, a petition with signatures amounting to 1.5 percent

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of the votes cast in the city for the office of secretary of state, must be submitted to the city clerk's office stating the intent to circulate referendum petitions.

If the required number of signatures was submitted, that would suspend action on the development for 21 days from the date the contract was signed, which was Oct. 6.

Those seeking the referendum would then have to submit petitions with 3,681 signatures, or 15 percent of the votes cast in the last election for secretary of state.

"Two weeks ago they (city) told us they'd inform us if the (626) signatures we submitted were accepted," said Sharon Stein, chair-

woman of Voters' Voice.

Donohue said since his opinion is that the project is not subject to a referendum, the initial petition would not serve to suspend action on the contract.

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi, who unsuccessfully proposed that the city council vote to put the issue to a vote of residents, said he has not been able to find language in the planned unit development ordinance, that precludes a referendum.

"Council approved it by a vote," Vagnozzi said. "That makes it legislative even though Mr. Donohue says that it isn't because it results in a contract (unlike other types of zoning)."

Stein said her group would rather have a referendum than have they inform us if the (626) signatures we submitted were accepted," said Sharon Stein, chair-

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by Voters' Voice over the council's approval of the Timbercrest project, said that the group isn't playing fair.

Lichtman cited a Michigan State Bureau of Elections law that requires groups that support or oppose a recall to register as a political committee "as opposed to registering as a Ballot Question Committee or an Independent

Committee."

"I just think it's time that they played by the rules," he said. "We're held to a standard, and I think it's time they (Voters' Voice) were."

Under the statute, any group that receives or spends \$500 or more in a calendar year to influence voters for or against a recall should register as a political group.

"I'm sure with all the literature

they handed out and all of their signs, they have spent much more than \$500 in in-kind services," he said.

Sharon Stein, chairwoman of Voters' Voice, said the group isn't accepting any money, but has accepted help. She said the group is an "informal" one and would not be subject to that law.

Registering as a political group is "a simple thing," Lichtman said.

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Bolans Financial Planning Group will soon be putting their knowledge to practical use in a live seminar.

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The seminar will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, November 15, at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, 42100 Crescent Blvd., Novi and at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 16, at the Somerset Inn, 2601 W. Big Beaver Rd., Troy.

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