



Hands on: Striking nurses from New York join hands outside Mercy Health Services Building on 12 Mile Road. Striking nurses from New York and other local labor union officials joined in the protest, which coincided with the Mercy Health board of directors' meeting.



Megaphone message: Former Farmington Hills state Sen. Jack Faxon speaks to a crowd outside Mercy Health Services Wednesday.

Striking N.Y. nurses ask sisters for mercy

BY SUZ BUCK
STAFF WRITER

The Sisters of Mercy show no mercy, say striking nurses.

That was the rallying cry as they protested with a contingent of local and national church and union leaders in front of Mercy Health Services on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills Wednesday.

"Even the Sisters of Mercy will be held accountable for their actions," a flier read.

No nurses are affected locally.

But supporters say that more than 100 registered nurses were forced to strike on Labor Day at the 140-bed Mercy Community Hospital in Port Jervis, N.Y., a small town near the area where New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania meet.

The Sisters of Mercy Regional

Community of Detroit manage their hospital, say supporters.

Some 30 nurses from Mercy Community Hospital demonstrated outside the board of directors meeting in Farmington Hills.

They were joined by other unions including the United Auto Workers and the Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance.

Mercy Health Services responded with a written statement that read: "Mercy Health Services (MHS) has a management contract with the Board of Directors of Mercy Hospital - Port Jervis, N.Y. MHS has absolutely no governance authority or responsibility to establish budgets and/or determine salary structure as it relates to the Port Jervis institution."

Among local supporters were Bishop Tom Gumbleton, retired state Sen. Jack Faxon, and Fred

Burton of U.S. Congressman John Conyers' office.

Nurses stayed at the Comfort Inn in Farmington Hills.

They contend that Mercy Community Hospital:

Froze the registered nurses' wages for two years.

Misused taxpayer money allocated for nurses' wage increases.

Hired strikebreakers and a "notorious union-busting law firm."

Pays registered nurses 40 percent less than other nurses in their area.

The labor rally was organized by Nurses for Quality Health Care.

The nurses asked for a place on Wednesday's board agenda but were denied, said Allison Laevey, researcher/labor

spokesman for Unit 1199.

This marks the first strike for the nurses since they first organized last November when they voted to be represented by National Health and Human Service Employees 1199.

"Two nurses were refused entry," Laevey said. "This was a peaceful demonstration."

She added that nurses at the Mercy Community Hospital in Port Jervis have been replaced by replacement workers provided by the U.S. Nursing Corps in Denver, Colo., a national firm whose nurses replace striking nurses.

Brenda Wolpert was a nurse for more than two years at the hospital and has been replaced.

"The Catholic church has said that it is clearly pro labor. I don't understand why they aren't accountable. Non-monetary things have been worked out."



Bishop speaks: Detroit Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton addresses the rally Wednesday. A representative from U.S. Congressman's John Conyers' office also spoke.

Officials surprised by wide vote margins on proposals

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Although he expected voters to approve the direct election of a mayor in Farmington Hills, councilman Terry Seaver said the margin surprised him.

"I thought it would be more like 55-45 percent," he said.

Seaver, a former Hills mayor, has long favored the idea of voters directly electing their mayor. Currently, the mayor is chosen by sitting city council members.

"In this type of election, opponents didn't get their message out, because there wasn't that much time and there were so many issues on the ballot," he said.

Seaver, along with council members Cheryl Oliverio, Jon Grant, Nancy Bates and Aldo Vagnoni voted to put the question on the November ballot. Mayor Larry Lichtman and Mayor pro-tem Joanne Smith opposed the proposal.

The 18,384-10,015 vote on the issue, a 65 to 35 percent margin,

means voters will select their mayor at the polls directly next year. The directly elected mayor will serve a two-year term, just as council members now do. But unlike council members, the mayor can serve only two, two-year terms.

Opponents had legitimate concerns that a separately elected mayor could try to build a power base and would have his or her own agenda, Seaver said. But the agenda will change for any mayor, directly elected or not, he said.

"Usually the mayor has an agenda going in," he said. "But once you come into office, that can change."

Seaver said when he joined the council, parks were not an issue. But by 1985, they became an issue that has continued to occupy Hills councils since. Seaver said another issue, the sale of alcohol to minors, was one the council had not anticipated.

"In the first ailing operation

(1977), at least 70 percent of the establishments were selling alcohol to minors," he said.

An issue that did not meet voter approval was a tax to support land acquisition.

Councilwoman Nancy Bates, who proposed the plan to levy a .5 mill tax for five years to buy odd lots of undeveloped land or buy down zoning, said she did not know if she would propose it again.

"The issue failed by better than 2-1 (18,711-9,836 or 68 to 32 percent).

"I thought the vote might be closer," she said, "especially with all the attention on development."

The measure, which has been used by other communities in the state and other parts of the country, allows cities or townships to control development more effectively than zoning would normally allow.

"I accept the decision of the voters," she said.

Consumer group credits businesswoman

Farmington Hills-based Consumer Credit Counseling Services vice president and CEO Jane McNamara was elected president and chairman of the board for the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business (SOCAP).

The election took place at a recent SOCAP Annual Conference in Chicago.

McNamara has been involved with SOCAP for many years, having served as president of the Great Lakes Chapter in metro Detroit from 1986 to 1988. She has also been on the national board since 1989. In 1992, McNamara received the Philip A. Hart award from the Consumer Educators of Michigan for outstanding accomplishment in the education

and counseling of consumers. She also received the Distinguished Service Award from Eastern Michigan University in 1991 for outstanding contributions to the field of consumer affairs.

SOCAP is an international professional association representing the country's top consumer affairs and customer service executives in more than 1,600 major corporations nationwide.

Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Michigan, a division of Credit Counseling Centers, is a non-profit, full-service agency with a comprehensive approach to financial counseling.

It has 28 centers in Michigan and one in Illinois.



Jane McNamara

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