Fantasy car raffle will cap off Founders Day Festival

If the promise of spring conjures up images of baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and a 1995 Corvette, you're in luck.

Or you could be as the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce prepares once again to make a dream come true for someone at the 1995 Corvette Fantasy Car Raffle Extravaganza on July 15, the final highlight to the 31st Annual Founders Day Festival, July 13-15.

The dream car or a $30,000 cash purse, as well as $3,000 in other prizes, will be raffled off for the ninth year as the festival concludes at the Extravaganza party to be held in downtown Farmington.

Tickets are $100 and only 1,000 will be available, which makes the chances great for walking, or driving, away a winner.

Included in the price of the tickets, which may be purchased by one or several parties, is admission for two to the Extravaganza.

This is the second year that the chamber will host the party as a means of promoting the raffle festivities, and according to chamber President Jody Soronen, the party is already becoming a tradition in the making.

According to Soronen, the idea of incorporating the raffle, which is the primary source of funding for the festival, into a party atmosphere was born out of a desire to make the raffle a real "community-linked event."

The chamber looked at communities like Brighton, which holds a similar event, and decided to fashion its raffle into one which would complement the high-spirited nature of the festival.

"We wanted to build something that would become a tradition to be looked forward to each year, like the festival itself," Soronen said. "What better way to bring it all together than by celebrating with a big party?"

Soronen added that the Extravaganza seemed to be just what the doctor ordered as a successful end to the three-day festivities. The chamber sold a record 936 raffle tickets and attendance at the party exceeded 700 people.

Joe Yaros, winner of the grand prize, attested to the high spirits held by the ticketholders. "I was having such a great time, I didn't even realize I won. My wife kicked me and said they called your name. I was pretty surprised because I'm one of those guys who never wins anything."

Yaros, already an owner of a Corvette, opted for the cash purse, using it toward paying tuition for his four children, and taking a trip to Las Vegas.

The Extravaganza will begin at 7 p.m. and winners will be drawn about 11 p.m. However, ticket holders need not be present to win. Adult partygoers will enjoy entertainment by Bobby Lewis and the Cracker Jack Band, and food and drink concessions will be available.

Raffle tickets are available and can be purchased until July 15 at the chamber office, 33000 Thomas Street, Suite 101, as well as other locations. For more information, please call the chamber at 474-3440.

Race from page 1A

Council members Terry Sever, who supported a directly elected mayor, Larry Lichtman; and Mayor Joanne Smith, who opposed the change, all said it was too early to decide whether they'd run for council. Their terms expire this year, and none of them said they would run for mayor.

"I'm not running for mayor, and you can quote me," Sever said, adding that he supported the change with the promise that he would not run for mayor.

"I haven't made up my mind (about council)," he said. "I've got a lot of other things that are taking up my time."

Lichtman, who is completing a two-year term, said it was too early.

"I'm undecided, but I plan to make the decision soon," said the former mayor. "If I run, it will be for re-election to the City Council."

'It's too early'

Smith — the last mayor to serve under the old system, in which the mayor is chosen by the City Council — said it was too early for her to decide if she'd run for council. She'd already decided not to run for mayor.

"The way it sounds, the office of mayor to some people means ruler," she said. "I opposed this (change). That is not what the office should be."

In addition to council members, some new and some familiar names may appear on the November ballot.

Attorney Paul Sowerby, who served on the council to fill a vacancy and then ran unsuccessfully, said he is considering running for mayor.

"There is a committee already formed that is encouraging me to run (for mayor)," said Sowerby, 51. "I opposed the directly elected mayor. But once it passed, I thought that it would be all the more important that the first mayor set a good example."

Sowerby said he will make an announcement by early May.

Sharon Stein, a member of the group Voters' Voice, which opposed the Timbercrest development, took out petitions for both mayor and City Council. Stein said she took out the petitions for mayor before Vagnozzi announced he would run for the office.

"Since Mr. Vagnozzi is running, I fully support him," she said. "He's the best thing that's happened to this city."

'Wait and see'

Stein said she would "wait and see" who came forward to run for the City Council.

Former councilmember and mayor Ben Marks has also taken out petitions for city council.

Dennis Fitzgerald, who was out of town at press time, took out petitions for City Council. Fitzgerald, who was chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission for 12 years and who has been active in recreation issues, served on the ice arena study committee and is a frequent participant at council meetings.

Businessman Roy Lindhardt, 53, has taken out petitions for both mayor and City Council.

"I haven't decided," said Lindhardt, who has been active in parks and recreation issues in the city, especially concerning the Woodland Hills Park. "It's a big time commitment. But I'm thinking seriously of running."

Julie Pulgini, 34, has taken out petitions for mayor. The 25-year Farmington Hills resident said issues surrounding development in the city are important to her.

"There is not a lot of room left for development," she said.

Pulgini has been active in Republican politics and works for U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg.

Candidates have until 4 p.m. Aug. 22 to file petitions, which must have a minimum of 151 signatures and a maximum of 303.

Bus from page 1A

The council's purpose wasn't to decide SMART's fate; just whether to put the matter on the ballot. Farmington Hills is expected to make a decision April 24.

Several Oakland County communities — 21 at last count — have opted out of the election.

County Commissioner Donn Wolf told council members they could do the same. If the property tax passes, though, the city will still be liable for $91,000.

Oakland County has agreed to pay the $500,000 cost of the election.

Wolf said he favors letting voters decide, but he'd vote against the measure. He cited several reasons, including the system's inefficiency.

Federal grants are based on the total number of miles and routes run.

"This system is set up to penalize efficiency," Wolf said.

SMART is running a $4 million deficit and is $21 million in debt, according to reports.

In light of SMART's financial troubles, Councilman Bill Hartsock wanted to know what the county has as a backup transit plan.

"I'm concerned from the perspective, not just of SMART continuing, but what will be done in Oakland County to provide transportation?" Hartsock said.

No contingency plan is in place, Wolf said. "We just found out about this March 15," he added.

Farmington Hills attorney Mark Steckloff spoke highly of SMART.

The system is one of the few in the country that doesn't receive direct funding from the state, he said. SMART receives a portion of state gas taxes.

Also, SMART's on-time and safety records are unmatched, he added.

"It's a good bang for the buck," Steckloff said.

Both sides need to get understandable information out to voters, Councilman Dick Tupper said. Uninformed voters are more likely to vote "no."

"And that might not be the way to go," Tupper said.

Oil from page 1A

"I would consider them (West Bay) one of the best we've dealt with in the last few years," said Bruce Waldo, DNR assistant district geologist. "They go beyond what we require with their monitoring."

Waldo said exploration of Oakland County has been "extensive" over the past few years by several companies.

"They (residents) have probably just not heard about it," he said.

They probably haven't heard about it because the companies are not likely to advertise where they are interested in drilling. That would give competitors an advantage.

West Bay has several working wells in the area, but another company, Wolverine, is trying to buy oil and gas rights in Commerce Township, according to one resident concerned with the proximity of a planned well to his property.

"I've had calls from people who get $500 a year (in royalties)," said Steve Sobczyk of Commerce Township. "But I'm worried about the effect on property values."

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