

Hat trick



Cap on: Farmington High senior Mike Carolan grimaces as his girlfriend Jamie Livermore puts his hat back on as they sit in the stands watching the Falcons boys' soccer team play Wednesday at North Farmington High. North Farmington High won the district match, 4-2.

Land, renovation plan to invigorate Grand River area

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

A recent property donation and a plan to renovate a regional car rental company property will both beautify and help in the economic redevelopment of the Grand River corridor.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car donated 1.7 acres of vacant land on the southeast corner of Middlebelt and Grand River that fronts the Rouge River. In addition, the company bought property that had belonged to Farmington Hills Chrysler Plymouth.

The donation and consolidation came at a good time. The city secured a grant to make curb and other safety improvements, add lighting that will improve both the beauty of the corridor from Eight Mile to Middlebelt and with the cooperation of local residents and businesses, keep it a viable economic area.

City Planning Director Dale Countegnan said the donated land will be used as a green buffer area between the businesses and residents.

The two parcels together create an area that can be developed into a park at some future date, Countegnan said.

The improvements to Grand River are being paid for with federal Community Development Block Grant money of \$347,000, Michigan Department of Transportation money (\$100,000), a \$7,000 contribution from the Economic Development Council and \$100,000 in city capital funds.

Improvements to the stretch of the historic boulevard will include landscaping, screening, handicap ramps, driveway access, street lighting and removal of old telephone poles.

Several other businesses have worked with the city to renovate,

■ 'Our administrative offices for our 65 locations in southeast Michigan and northeast Ohio will be at that office. We hope to be the anchor business at one end while Botsford (General Hospital) will be anchoring the other.'

Michael Kane
Enterprise vice president

change signs and facades and add landscaping. But the Enterprise renovation would be the biggest single business project along the boulevard to date.

"Our administrative offices for our 65 locations in southeast Michigan and northeast Ohio will be at that office," said Michael Kane, Enterprise vice president. "We hope to be the anchor business at one end while Botsford (General Hospital) will be anchoring the other," he said. "We're excited about the project."

Enterprise, which has more than 2,400 offices in North America and will have more than \$2.4 million in revenues this year, rents cars on a local basis, has a large fleet leasing operation and also sells its used vehicles. The Grand River location will take part in all three activities as well as being a regional office.

"Ninety percent of this will be office space," Kane said. "We worked on the (Grand River Avenue Corridor) Study Committee with residents to come up with something that will really improve the area for them as well."

Sowerby, Vagnozzi end debates for Hills seat on optimistic note

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Like two boxers in the final round, Farmington Hills mayoral candidates Paul Sowerby and Aldo Vagnozzi answered the bell one more time.

The two men, squaring off in the first directly elected mayoral campaign in the city's young history, went over mostly familiar territory in their seventh and final debate Wednesday morning at the Optimist Club breakfast at the San Marino Golf Club on Halsted.

Dennis Fitzgerald, himself a candidate for city council, introduced the two to the 30 or so gathered for breakfast.

"This is something near and dear to my heart," Fitzgerald quipped before introducing the two.

Current City Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi began by defining what he thought were the two main issues of the campaign: The public safety tax proposal, which he supports; and the issue of leadership.

As he had done in earlier debates, Vagnozzi took Sowerby to task on both counts for being "neutral" of the public safety proposal.

"This is not an issue you can be neutral on if you want to lead," Vagnozzi said. "He wants increased police and fire protection. He just doesn't want to pay for it."

Sowerby, who has said he is not favoring or opposing the 1-mill tax over 10 years, said he would make the "hard choices" needed by the city's next mayor

■ The question of campaign finances came up as Budge Gere asked how much the candidates had raised.

and would try to end the divisiveness in city politics between developers, business, residents and the city council.

Sowerby repeated his desire that some less important items in the city budget be given less priority so that existing taxes would go toward police and fire protection.

"We've got the icing on the cake," he said. "Now we're going back to the voters to get the cake."

In addition to finding money in the city's existing budget, Sowerby would like to see the fire department take over all EMS runs that he says would make an additional \$500,000 a year for the city. Sowerby said he also favored adding a motor carrier enforcement, like that in Redford, that could bring in \$300,000 the first year.

Such measures, along with getting rid of some budget extras, would pay for some of the items and manpower requested by the police and fire departments. He added that a management audit did not call for a fifth fire station, which is part of the public safety proposal.

Vagnozzi said Sowerby's proposal to have a full-time EMS setup would not be practical without at least one (the centrally located fifth station) full-time fire station.

"You can't have a full-time EMS without having a full-time fire station," he said.

Vagnozzi added that Farmington Hills' tax rate has decreased in the past eight years.

The question of campaign finances came up as Budge Gere asked how much the candidates had raised.

Vagnozzi said he'd raised about \$10,000, or 20-25 percent of what he had heard Sowerby would be raising (\$50,000). Sowerby said he did not think it was a real issue, adding that he was complying with election laws.

All candidates were required to file with the Oakland County Elections Commission by Friday. According to their filings Vagnozzi had contributions of \$9,767.60 and had spent \$6,372.88. Sowerby had reported contributions of \$42,211.58 and expenditures of \$38,076.11.

Sowerby mentioned that State Rep. Jan Dolan had contributed to his campaign. Dolan said she had, but added that she had contributed to the fund-raisers of all of the city candidates, including Vagnozzi.

When asked who they endorsed for city council, Sowerby named Fitzgerald and Ben Marks. Vagnozzi said he supported Terry Sever, Nancy Bates and Vicki Barnett.

Trees to be planted in subdivisions

Farmington Hills City Council recently approved the planting of 61 trees in eight subdivisions.

The trees will be placed in the front yard right of way of residential lots in Country Ridge, Green Valley Estates, Copperwood East, Copperwood North, Stratton Hill, Strathmore, Hunter's Point Colony and Arbor Oaks.

The New Subdivision Street Tree Planting Program is in its eighth year. During that time

the city has planted nearly 1,200 trees in 14 new subdivisions, city planner Ed Gardiner said.

Funding for this program is provided by builders who are required to deposit \$300 per lot when filing building permit applications. That money buys the trees that are specially selected for Michigan weather.

Five varieties of trees have typically been planted: pin oaks, hard maples, thornless honeylocusts, and several types of ash

and linden.

The planning office works directly with each homeowner to locate the tree on the lot, to oversee the trees' short-term and long-term care, and to provide replacement trees for those that die.

This year's contract for providing and planting the trees was awarded to Tom's Landscaping and Nursery. The cost of the contract is \$111,360 and includes a two-year warranty on the trees.



Monday through Friday, 10 am to 9 pm
Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm
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