

Hearty candidates licking chops over choice House seat

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

State Rep. Jan Dolan's decision not to run for another term wasn't a complete surprise to many of Farmington-area political observers — including some who would like to follow in her footsteps.

Andy Raczkowski, a relative newcomer to state GOP politics, gave the incumbent Dolan a surprise in the 1994 primary, losing by only 112 votes, 5,135 to 5,023. Raczkowski said he had already planned to announce his next run for the office in the coming days when he heard the announcement.

"I didn't think she would run again," he said. "Jan was a good representative for Farmington and Farmington Hills, but she was losing on the issues, the message voters were sending. And with term limits, this would have made her a lame duck (representative)."

Raczkowski, who is part owner of a printing business in Farmington Hills, added that he wasn't surprised by Dolan's endorsement of Cathy Webb.

"I anticipated that," he said. "I invite her to the race. She is a good individual, but she doesn't

believe in the conservative message."

Raczkowski added that he expects several people to run for the seat.

One familiar name who is also considering a run is Hills City Councilman Terry Sever. Sever, 45, has served 10 years on the council, including as the city's mayor in 1989. He ran unsuccessfully for state representative and has been involved in the campaigns of several area candidates.

"I am not surprised that Jan is not running," Sever said. "I did not want to run against an incumbent. But I may run."

Sever said he would make a decision over the next six weeks. Sever and his wife, Linda, own a printing business. But family obligations and another possible marketing venture are important considerations, he said.

"Cathy will be a very strong candidate," Sever said. "Politically, Andy will bring a lot to his campaign."

Sever said he would run a grassroots campaign emphasizing his independence.

"If I'm going to run, this is my time," he said.

One person who works closely with the former Farmington Hills mayor said she was not one of those interested in the job.

"She (Dolan) had been considering the pluses and minuses of running for a long time," said Nancy Bates, Dolan's legislative aid.

Bates, a Farmington Hills council member and former mayor, laughed when asked if she would be interested in running for the job.

"I was just appointed to a national committee on human services," she said. "I've got a lot of

things I want to get involved with."

Bates said she supports Webb who she sees as bringing many of the same views and abilities to the office as has Dolan. But Bates added that Sever has brought "a lot of creative energy" to the city council.

"I have no problem with Terry running," she said.

Ben Marks, no stranger to Farmington Hills politics and current Farmington Area Republican Club chairman, said he had no interest in the job. Marks had

See CANDIDATES, 6A

Webb weaves her way to good intentions

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Cathy Webb said she intends to do more than just run for Jan Dolan's state House seat.

"I intend to win it," she added. Webb, 43, announced her candidacy Tuesday afternoon on a carphone en route from Metropolitan Airport after returning from visiting her ill mother in Florida. She filed as a candidate Feb. 26.

In November, Webb was honored as 1995 Citizen of the Year. The Hills mother of two teenage boys has been a Farmington School Board trustee for six years, including an unprecedented two-year term as president.

She's been active in several community organizations, including Farmington Youth Assistance and PTA. She's also a member of

the Farmington Area Republican Club.

State office wasn't an aspiration until recently, Webb said. Dolan casually asked her if she'd consider running while the two were talking at a meeting in December.

"She said, 'Why don't you think about it over the Christmas holiday?'" Webb recalled. "I don't think she had decided (not

to run) yet quite honestly."

If successful, Webb said she'll resign from the school board. Her board term expires in 1998.

The board would likely appoint someone until the school election in June 1997, Webb said. Her board term expires in 1998.

Webb has been a school board member when district weathered

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paign for Webb. "She was president when they went through the massive changes in financing foisted on them by Lansing."

... more travel for one thing... and I've been offered some consulting work," she answered.

Dolan, who makes close to \$50,000 as a representative, is on the powerful House Appropriations Committee, which handles the state's \$8 billion general fund budget. Working on the committee has been the high point of her career in Lansing, she said.

"That's such a massive undertaking," she said. "I'm on the subcommittee for health care, which is combining mental health, public health and the medical system."

"There's been so much done in the last few years," she added, "and I've been privileged to be in the middle of it. It's been exciting, but I'll tell you one thing: I'm looking forward to not having to

leave here at 6 in the morning to drive up to Lansing."

Dolan said she has experienced few disappointments since going to Lansing.

"Some things take a lot longer to do than you'd like... but you're working with 110 people," she said.

"I can do that"

Dolan, a widow with four sons and "two exceptional grandchildren," arrived in Farmington Hills in 1966 when husband Walt, a trucking company manager, was transferred from Cleveland. She had a degree from the University of Akron and had taught high school.

"I was going to stay out of all activities and just do the things I like to do," she recalled. "I'd done my stint as den mother and Sunday school teacher. This was going to be my time."

Dolan became involved in Farmington-area arts programs. Then a friend introduced her to the Farmington Township Beautification Commission activities, an experience that stimulated her support of environmental legislation.

On July 1, 1973, Farmington Township became the city of Farmington Hills. Later, Margaret Schaeffer, who served on the last township board and the first city council, won a judgeship on the District Court. That left a vacancy on the city council.

"They were looking for a woman to replace her, and I said OK kind of as a lark," Dolan said. "I

said, 'Sure, I can do that.' So I turned in my resume... and I got the job."

On the Hills Council, she became embroiled in the battle, eventually successful, for senior citizen housing in the city. She served two terms as the council-voted mayor.

On to the House

Dolan's bid for the State House came in 1988 when she emerged victorious from a tough, four-way, Republican primary and then easily defeated Democrat John Dolan (no relation) in the general election.

She had little trouble getting re-elected the next two elections, but newcomer Andy Raczkowski tossed her a scare in the 1994 GOP primary. Dolan won, 5,135 votes to 5,023.

She worked her way up to the leadership council, a kind of executive committee within the House GOP ranks. She left that when a time-consuming post on the Appropriations Committee opened up.

Health problems — allergies and two artificial hips made necessary because of arthritis — have slowed Dolan in recent years, perhaps keeping her from campaigning as hard as she'd like.

With term limits looming and someone she could support waiting, Dolan decided to call it quits after this term.

"In talking to Cathy, she said, 'Yeah, when you step down, I'll be ready to move,'" Dolan said. "I said, 'How soon, Cathy?'"

Two Dolan-sponsored bills were passed into law in 1995, according to Michigan Legislative Status, a state publication. One was the mental health appropriations bill. The other had to do with senior housing, permitting termination of a lease without penalty in certain circumstances.

A Lansing insider called Dolan "a better-than-average legislator who has gained better-than-average respect."

Politically, Dolan was ranked as a moderate-to-conservative lawmaker.

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