

Lights

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"philosophical and financial reasons."

Nearly three decades later, the potentially controversial issue is back. An ad hoc committee will soon begin studying the feasibility of lighting the high school football fields, with a recommendation possible by February. The fields could have lights as soon as the 1998 season.

Describing himself as "a throwback," Cotton, now retired from education and a resident of Birmingham, isn't enthralled with the idea.

"I just like day ball," Cotton said.

But Cotton, whose career as athletic director continued until 1983, followed by two terms on the Farmington school board, said he is aware of how the times are changing. To that end, he recalled a recent conversation with the district's current AD, Ron Holland.

Not ambivalent

"I talked to Ron the other day about it," Cotton said Tuesday. "I said whatever happens, let it

happen that way. I'm not ambivalent about it... You have to buy into the problems that go with it, that's all."

According to Cotton, drawing from personal experience, Friday night contests were too much of a happening. Students didn't always pay attention to the action on the gridiron.

"I attended away games in the evening," Cotton said. "I think half of the kids didn't know there was a football game going on... It's like social hour, with kids smoking by the fence."

Conversely, those who attend Saturday games "go for one reason, to watch a football game."

Cotton conceded, however, that he hasn't attended any high school night football for about four years, and that Friday night behavior today could be different from the way it used to be.

At a recent school board meeting, Vice President Cathy Webb said she thinks that is the case. Webb said she has "never observed an incident involving irresponsible or inappropriate behavior from students" during the past three or four years of attending night games at other schools. Her son is a FHS player.

A precursor to the formation of an ad hoc committee was a survey of other Oakland County districts. There were two significant revelations: the only high schools without lights are in the Farmington district; and rowdy student behavior has not been much of an issue elsewhere.

"We've been concerned in years past about the conduct of kids at night," said Don Cowan,

the Farmington district's executive director for K-12 instruction and student services. "But in some of the (survey) questions asked of other districts... they're finding less and less of that (rowdiness)."

He's mellowing

Cowan, who started his Farmington schools career in 1962, admitted he was also a proponent of daytime football, but that he is now mellowing about the issue. "There's something to be said about it."

The ad hoc committee will be led by FHS principal Jim Myers, Harrison parent Lance Pesci and North parent Mary Barnes. It also will include input from athletic directors and coaches, residents, police and other district staff members.

Shifting games to Friday nights would eliminate Saturday scheduling conflicts for high school marching bands - who often attend weekend tournaments - and probably boost

attendance.

But what the committee has to find out is how much a game's might impact neighborhoods surrounding both Farmington and North high schools. Harrison's field is more detached from subdivisions, said Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

Topics of discussion will include supervision of larger crowds, parking lot safety and traffic flow around the high schools.

Maxfield said the cost to install lights at each high school could range between \$60,000 and \$100,000. Money for the lights would come out of the general fund. All schools could get the lights at once, or they could be phased in one school at a time.



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Apartments

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drafty windows to roaches - are also on the rise, officials said.

"By and large, we have a pretty good situation here," City Manager Daniel Hobbs said, "but we have some trouble spots."

Apartment complex owners argue such a program penalizes everyone for the inactions of a few.

They also contend mandatory inspections - paid for by apartment owners through fees - would create a bureaucracy and be used to generate money for the city. The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs Division and The Real Estate Investment Association of Oakland County wrote letters in opposition to the plan.

Landlords don't have problems with inspections involving common areas - hallways and porches, said a spokesman for an apartment owners association. Unit inspections are intrusive, though.

"What we are concerned about is the invasion of someone's home," said Irvin Yackness of

Southeast Michigan Apartment Owners Association. "That apartment residence is someone's home, just like a single family house is someone's home."

Market forces police how properties are maintained: If an apartment has roaches or is in disrepair, tenants can simply move out, Yackness said.

One owner noted he charges \$600 to \$1,800 a month in rent for his properties. "I think (tenants) let me know if they have a problem; they're not bashful," said Marvin M. Kaftan, president of Kaftan Enterprises Inc., which owns Covington Club Apartments in Farmington Hills among others.

Several inspections are required by fire marshals, insurance adjusters and mortgage lenders, said Ed Glenn of Farmington Hills-based Bernos Bestak Co.

"There's a significant number of inspections already done on the property, not to mention the most important one of all - the resident," Glenn said.

Some council members have concerns, too.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett wondered why the city couldn't target those who own shoddy apartments. Any program would have to be enforced across the board, said John Donohue, city attorney. Landlords can already be ticketed for civil infractions.

Staff and money are not there to respond to all complaints, said Dale Countegnan, Planning and Community Development director.

Two inspectors would be hired as part of the \$165,000 estimated cost of the program, which is intended to be self-sufficient. Revenue would come from a per-unit inspection fee charged to each apartment owner.

Other communities have similar rental inspection programs, city officials said. Ones in Livonia, Ann Arbor, Southfield, Royal Oak and Troy were some of those looked at by city staff.

"I generally believe less government is the best government," Councilman Jerry Ellis said. "I think the basic idea behind this program is a good one, a solid one and one worth meeting on to discuss further."

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