

# Did parents know about alcohol?

By RICHARD PEARL  
STAFF WRITER

Although the jury trial of two Farmington parents charged with hosting a teen-age beer-drinking party in their house won't begin until February, the war of words between the opposing attorneys was in full swing Tuesday.

"That's ridiculous," fumed Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Justin Davis when told of defense attorney Robn Mitchell's statement that his clients "did not know about the drinking."

Said Davis: "As far as I'm concerned, there's no way these parents couldn't have known."

Davis said there's certainly enough evidence to prosecute Michelle Griffith and Kevin Alexander, parents of a 17-year-old Farmington High School senior. "I'm surprised it's going to trial," he added.

Mitchell's request for a jury trial was granted Monday afternoon during a pretrial hearing before Judge Maria Parker of the 47th District Court in Farmington, who set the date for 9 a.m. Feb. 9.

The trial is the result of an Oct. 25 incident in which Farmington police, responding to an anonymous call about a loud party, came to the Regency address in the Chatham Hills subdivision about 11:30 p.m. and found a crowd estimated at more than 100 teens at the party.

Police reports said party-goers paid \$5 each to come in and

"drink as much as they wanted." Officers wound up filing misdemeanor charges of "furnishing alcoholic beverages to minors under age 21" against the youth's mother, Griffith, and his stepfather, Alexander.

The charge carries a maximum penalty per person of 90 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

At the time, the parents denied to police that such beverages were being consumed in their house.

Mitchell, a Southfield-based attorney, said Tuesday, "the question here is whether or not the parents knew there were teens" drinking in the home.

"My clients' position is that they did not know about the drinking, but that when it came to their attention, they did everything in their power to safeguard the kids." He added he didn't think "the police are going to be able to prove" the parents knew.

The attorney said the central issue is bigger than that, however. Claiming the trial relates "to a lot more than just this couple," Mitchell said his clients "are being put in the situation that many, many other parents could be placed in" — being held responsible for teens who come to a party intoxicated, then leave and get arrested.

"Police are demanding that parents have to sit in the basement and monitor what's in their (the teen-agers' drinking) cups," Mitchell continued.

He said the party "got out of hand in terms of the large numbers" of teens present in part because the couple's son "is a well-known kid, has a great grade point average and is very popular."

Furthermore, he said, Griffith and Alexander "shut it off, closed the doors." Then Alexander, the stepfather, "tried to get kids to

# Springbrook gets water

Some say policy was ignored, it's too costly, wells are fine

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

**"We can't ask one group to play by the rules and not the other."**  
Vicki Barnett  
—Farmington Hills councilwoman

Residents in a Farmington Hills subdivision are getting city water — whether they like it or not.

Some 20 out of 38 residents in Springbrook subdivision east want to tap into city water on an 11 Mile main and signed a petition stating their support. However, the petition was submitted 10 days after the city's recommended 60-day period.

Those opposed to the water main and its \$10,000 assessment per resident say the extra time allowed to collect signatures is unfair.

They won't see any appreciable value in their homes with the water main improvement, which will cost an estimated \$383,600. More so, they say their well water is fine.

To prove his point, a Springbrook resident held up two bottles of seemingly pristine water to council. One was from his well; the other was from the city hall fountain.

"You can't tell the difference," Bill Saffran said.

Farmington Hills City Council members went with the flow and voted in favor of setting up a special assessment district at Monday's meeting. However, the council added a stipulation that allow residents until 4:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 26, to change their vote in writing.

The motion passed with Councilwoman Vicki Barnett dissenting.

"We can't ask one group to play by the rules and not the other," Barnett said.

At least five signatures were acquired after the deadline, which gave the project a majority needed to go ahead. That's troubling, Barnett said.

The 60-day period is a guideline, not a law, said John Donohue, city attorney. It's up to the council whether to accept the petition as is, he added.

Councilwoman Nancy Bates suggested tacking on another 10-day extension. "That's a just way in my mind," Bates said.

Residents against the water main wanted the project delayed another year, which is required when a majority of homeowners are not in favor.

"I believe a policy is a policy," said Springbrook resident Habeli Mouin.

Those in favor want better water.

They say their well water is rusty, smells and tastes funny. Some are troubled by published reports of arsenic being found in other wells.

Further delays will only cause the cost to go up, they add.

"Frankly, I'm tired replacing dishwashers and toilets and other items affected by what comes out of the well," said George Curran.

Unlike longtime residents against the project, Fred Bohlaw said he's recently moved in.

"The last thing I want to do is spend \$10,000 on a house I just bought," Bohlaw said. "Water is supposed to be clear and not have a taste. Mine does."

"We're getting to the change of the century. We need to change with the times. We're not living up north. It's a commodity that everyone should have in their house."

A Springbrook resident explained the petition delay, saying she "sat on" the signatures while waiting to collect more from homeowners away on vacation. Another resident collected five signatures and turned it in.

Council members were caught off guard about the delay.

"I'm not making excuses, but we didn't know about this until tonight," Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi said.

Testimonials about the need for city water swayed at least one property owner, who said he was signing onto the project. He owns two property parcels, which would push the number up to 22 homeowners in favor of the water main along Springbrook Drive from Brookview to 11 Mile.

"The reality of it is people's wells are going to die," Bernie Platt said. "Sooner or later, we're going to have to hook into the water system."



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