

Officials want newspaper strike to end

Farmington Hills City Council members passed a resolution urging both sides to bring an end to the ongoing Detroit newspaper labor dispute.

Ironically, a council member who wanted the item removed from the agenda altogether ended up winning over his colleagues — both pro and con — with his revised resolution.

At Monday's meeting, Councilman Jerry Ellis termed the initial resolution presented by the Rev. Jim Wright of St. Alexander's Catholic Church as "very, very biased."

"It is not even-handed," Ellis said.

Ellis questioned the wisdom of the council getting involved in a dispute that is nearly three years old. He drew a quick response from Councilwoman Vicki Barnett when he said the time to intercede was when unions "were throwing star nails in the streets."

The National Labor Relations Board has said the Detroit Newspaper Agency has been

involved in unfair labor practices, Barnett noted. Last year, the Council of Newspaper Unions put an end to the strike and some workers have been called back.

She urged council members to pass the resolution, which asked Farmington Hills to join other city councils and religious leaders to join a regional summit conference on the matter on May 18 at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit. Religious Leaders for Justice at the Detroit Newspapers wrote the original document.

So far, 15 city councils and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners passed similar resolutions.

"It needs some type of a jumpstart," said Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, who added later: "It may not help, but it doesn't hurt."

Council members Jon Grant, Cheryl Oliverio and Terry Sever agreed with Ellis. Councilwoman Nancy Bates was not present during the discussion.

"I think the best approach is not by finger pointing, but by urging both sides to settle," Sever said.

Vagnozzi suggested removing all the whereases in the proposed resolution. The original resolution stated the "lockout has caused an unseemly and divisive confrontation in our community" and "lives of individuals and families of locked-out workers continue to be adversely affected by the lockout."

Then, Ellis read his own version, which eliminates references to lockout and adverse affect on families. His version still notes how the dispute has affected the traditional role played by both daily papers.

The motion passed unanimously.

"I should have asked you to write it in the first place," Vagnozzi said. "I think Mr. Ellis did a wonderful job."

The priest from St. Alexander's agreed. "I'm very pleased with it," Wright said. "Mr. Ellis did a good job."

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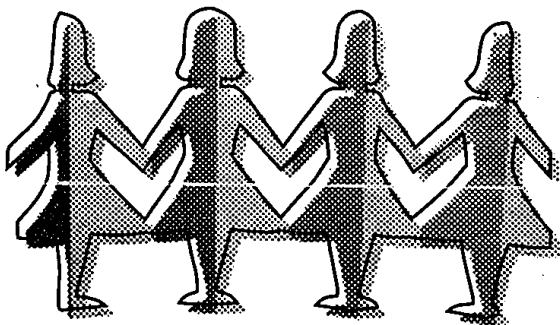
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