

# Fire from page A1

the basement of his house for as long as they needed to.

"I wouldn't turn my back on anybody," said Abraham, who resides around the corner on

Nine Mile. "Especially someone as good-hearted as this woman is."

Abraham spoke about the run of bad luck that Amayo has

recently been dealt.

"I hope God puts out a hand here somehow and helps her," Abraham said. "She just lost her job yesterday, believe it or not. And now today, this. And she has bad health."

Amayo had worked as a private health care provider, assisting patients with Alzheimer's disease. She said she knew her job was going to be phased out this summer.

Schornack said a neighbor telephoned the fire department about the blaze. The fire crept up the outside of the house, burned through vinyl siding and then resulted in a downed power line in the backyard.

The amount of damage to the family's personal belongings was estimated at \$40,000. There were no injuries that required hospital treatment, he added.



Offering help: Timothy Abraham, a neighbor of the Amayo family, comforts Jeffrey Amayo as firefighters finish their job. Abraham planned to offer shelter to the Amayos until they could find permanent housing.

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## Store from page A1

whether talks were progressing. "If at that time things don't look positive, we'll bring that information back to you," Lauffoff said.

But any kind of stonewalling will probably trigger the beginning of legal action, several city officials said during Monday's session.

"Obviously, we'd have to demonstrate that Farmer Jack/A&P is not cooperating (with Kimco)," said John Donohue, city attorney. "That would be the key."

Hartsock and Lauffoff were among the city contingent who participated in a mid-July meeting with officials from Farmer Jack/A&P and Kimco, in which the stance of the community was once again made clear.

"I think (Kimco officials) real-

ize a food store is a better draw for that center," Lauffoff said. "They've been up front with the council."

Donohue delved into the possibility of filing a lawsuit. Farmer Jack/A&P and Kimco have a legitimate, legal lease that doesn't expire for three years. But the attorney cited a relatively recent new state law, about the negative impact a vacant building has on surrounding businesses and residences.

According to the statute, as explained by Donohue, any building that remains empty for more than six months, "where there is no attempt to sell or lease it becomes unsafe simply because of its vacancy."

One example mentioned by Donohue was the closing of Kroger at Grand River-Halsted

during the 1980s. Several other adjacent stores eventually left that center.

"If Farmer Jack/A&P fails to cooperate with Kimco in attempting to re-lease that property, then they are in fact creating a public nuisance and we would be prepared to file a lawsuit," Donohue explained. "We would try to obtain an injunction that public nuisance."

Donohue, in answering a question from councilwoman Joanne McShane, said it will be a "judgment call" on the part of city officials as to how long they should wait before they decide a good faith negotiation effort is absent and thus move forward with legal action.

"We think (the vacant store) creates a definite hardship," McShane said. "This ... hurts Rentlorn. It hurts the retail economy of the area."

A likely major issue to be decided during any negotiations is the bargain-basement lease Farmer Jack/A&P holds for that location through Sept. 30, 2001. Lauffoff said the store pays \$1.25 per square foot, far less than the estimated \$10-\$14 per square foot paid by other stores at the center.

Lauffoff wondered out loud about one scenario - Farmer Jack/A&P maintaining control of the space, but sub-letting it to another business that sold some food items.

Would that store pay the going rate, and if so, would Kimco still receive only the \$1.25, or would it split the difference with Farmer Jack/A&P?

Several residents, following the report, commented about the issue.

"What is the least time to wait?" asked Annalee Morrison. "I'm a little impatient."

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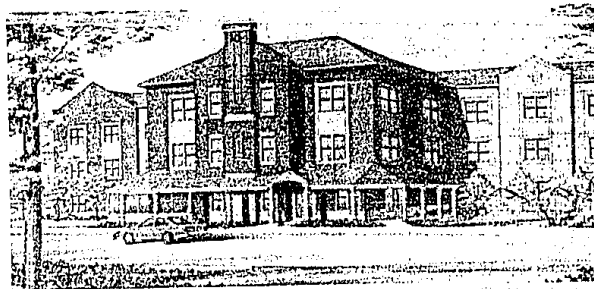


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