

Council plans appointment

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Terry Sever's Farmington Hills city council seat is not even vacated — let alone cold — as names are already springing up as possible successors.

Sever, who won an Oakland County Commission seat, plans to resign at Monday's city council meeting. He's stepping down to get ready for his new part-time position, which starts in January.

The council's task will be to reappoint someone to fill the unexpired term, which is up next year.

"I've heard all kinds of rumors," said Jon Grant, Farmington Hills councilman. "I've heard how this process is going to go down from three or four people and we haven't even discussed it yet."

Names being circulated include Planning Commissioner Barry Brickner, Zoning Board of Appeals member Richard Corey and Parks and Recreation Commissioner Dennis Fitzgerald. All three said they intend to apply.

Two and a half years ago, the city council appointed Mestie Kurzeja to fill Aldo Vagnozzi's term. The council interviewed candidates during a public meeting before selecting Kurzeja.

Council members appear to favor that method, though nothing has been officially decided.

Grant wants someone who doesn't have any desire to run for the position. He'd like them to serve in an interim basis.

"I will not support someone who seeks the seat for incumbency," Grant said. "I think it dissuades people from jumping into the race when faced with going up against an incumbent."

Ironically, incumbency doesn't

appear to work for appointed council member Kurzeja lost to Jerry Ellis in the subsequent election after she was appointed.

Brickner confirmed he's going to apply once Sever's vacancy is official.

"It's presumptuous of me to put in a letter of request until Monday; no one has resigned yet," Brickner said. "It will be one of the usual suspects."

Corey has been up for three council appointments, but those have gone to Larry Lichtman, Paul Sowerby and Kurzeja.

All three indicate, if appointed, they would run in November. Fitzgerald said it be "disingenuous" to ask to be appointed and not run for election.

By then, there may be two terms open with the mayoral election on tap. Due to term limits, Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi won't be running for re-election.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BERGER

Entertain: Harrison ensemble members, including Mike Schim and Derek Lewis played jazzy tunes to brighten the crowd's long afternoon.

Plop from page A1

did plenty to entertain the approximately 150 people who showed up on a chilly day for the festivities, said Harrison band parent Leah Berger.

"He was fantastic, everybody was raving about Norman," said Berger, whose daughter, Karen, is a member of Harrison's symphony and marching bands.

Deed holders paid \$5 to own one square yard of choice pasture land, known as a "Plop Plot." Berger said almost \$8,000 of the plots were sold, raising more than \$12,000 to be divided among seven Harrison booster clubs. If a plop landed on or near the plot, owners would have had a good shot at a prize. But Norman wasn't able to "plop" on the field during his appointed time.

So the names of five "deed" holders were selected at random. The winners were:

Susan Haven of Troy, first place, \$1,000; Phil Angelella of Farmington Hills, second place, \$500; John Cavataio of Grosse Pointe Woods, third place, \$300; Harrison band member and freshman Tracy Byrne, fourth place, \$200; and Jake A. Willie of Albany, Ga., fifth place, \$100.

Norman's inability to plop wasn't for a lack of effort from his trainers or others at the event.

"They were giving him bananas and had him chasing banana peels up and down the field," to exercise him enough where he might relieve himself, explained Berger.

The sideshow didn't pay off during the actual Operation Cow Plop. But Norman, an 1,100-pounder described by Berger as "absolutely the gentlest animal I've ever been around," finally suc-

ceeded almost as soon as it was over.

"At 4:30 (p.m.), when they were leading him off the field, Norman gave us the biggest plop we'd ever seen. ... Had it hit on some lines (on the field) there would have been a minimum of two winners, maybe three or four," Berger said.

Among the sponsors and beneficiaries were boosters for band and orchestra, boys' basketball, football, girls' cross country and track, pom-pom, baseball and softball. Berger hopes other groups at the school might participate in next year's event. "It's a wonderful opportunity for all the booster groups to participate" in.

Assessors included 47th District Judge Maria Parker, Harrison assistant principal Mary Brown and Paul Barber, music coordinator for Farmington schools.

Hills man faces drug charges

A 26-year-old Farmington Hills man was arraigned Friday afternoon in 47th District Court on one count of being in possession of a controlled substance under 25 grams.

Jason Laughlin was arraigned and faces a hearing set for 8:30 a.m. Monday, Nov.

16, in 47th District Court.

Police at about 1:45 a.m. Friday, arrested a "suspicious-looking man" parked in a car in the Crosswinds Shopping Center lot at Nine Mile and Farmington roads, said Michael Wiggins, deputy director for the Farmington Public Safety

Department.

According to Wiggins, officers found a very small amount of crack cocaine in the car, "a couple pieces" which measured .2 grams. "He (apparently) was in the process of trying to smoke it" when he was spotted by police.

Jack from page A1

turned away, all bets are off. "Because this tenant, we believe, meets the needs of all parties ... we expect this will be approved," Lauhoff said. "If not, I doubt if the city will wait for another refusal from A&P before considering legal action."

According to Lauhoff, if this type of tenant is refused, after all the work that's gone into it by Kimco, to meet the needs of A&P, then we would not be encouraged that any other type of food store would be approved."

Such a lawsuit would be based on the state's relatively recent blight law. According to the statute, any building that remains vacant for six months, and where no attempt is made to sell or lease it, is a public nuisance and "becomes unsafe simply because of its vacancy." City Attorney John Donohue told the city council earlier.

Frank Descenzo, Kimco director of leasing, could not be reached for comment late last week.

Farmer Jack closed despite protests from residents, who signed a petition during the summer, urging that a top-quality, full-service grocery store be put into that retail space.

Kimco and Farmer Jack/A&P have a legitimate, legal lease that runs through Sept. 30, 2001. Terms of that 1960s-era lease reveal that the store paid just \$1.25 per square foot, far less than the \$10-\$14 being paid by other tenants in the center.

Neighborhood from page A1

Another option is looking into other zoning classifications for larger lots that exceed the city's RA-1A standards.

"I think the city should take the action and change the zoning in those areas rather than waiting for something to happen," said Claude Conter, Hills planning consultant.

What city planners want to prevent is another Power Road fiasco.

A new housing development is going up on the natural beauty road, which residents and city officials agree will alter the neighborhood's rural setting. The city and residents went to court with the developer to fight it.

The city has several vacant lots next to existing subdivisions, which could be developed in similar fashion.

One concern with in-fill developments is incompatible housing such as on 10 Mile east of Orchard Lake where new colo-

nials are up next to existing ranch style homes. Another downfall is the trees and other greenery that are sacrificed, one city official said.

"Today's developers are trying to maximize their profits until everything is gone," Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi said.

An ordinance to protect the character of neighborhoods can work if the city can back it up with sound rationale, City Attorney John Donohue said.

One reason would be to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents. For instance, the city could back up such a zoning ordinance by noting a larger development could potentially increase flooding risks.

One problem is selling a zoning change to residents who'd have to initiate the rezoning requests.

Most are in Section 1 in the city's northeast section: Fairgreens Hills; Franklin Forest; and Franklin Fairways subdivi-

sion. Other potential areas for rezoning are West Franklin Estates on 14 Mile and Farmington roads, acreage parcels at 10 Mile and Farmington and supervisor's subdivision No. 8 at Eight Mile and Halsted.

"Soft pedal it all you want, but some people are going to think it's the heavy hand of government coming down," City Manager Steve Brock said.

Public hearings are required for any proposed zoning changes. Before those take place, Councilman Jon Grant suggested city staff meet with residents and educate them about the potential for in-fill developments.

Council of Homeowners Association has also been asked to help. Andy Nickelhoff, COHA chairman, attended Thursday's joint meeting.

"With the Power Road issue, everyone was content," said Bob Bruckner, planning commission member, "until there was a problem."

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