

COHA

Umbrella organization represents city's neighborhoods

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Representing more than half of the city's neighborhoods, the Farmington Hills Council of Homeowners Associations is clearly a force to be reckoned with.

Members of the volunteer organization, reactivated in the mid-1980s, have testified on behalf of homeowners throughout the community, tackling such issues as up-zoning and cellular phone tower placement. President Ed Spring stresses the organization doesn't set out to stop development.

"We always try to maintain a good working relationship with the City Council, Planning Commission and ZBA (zoning board of appeals)," Spring said. "The purpose is to make sure development is compatible with the area."

COHA made a splash in recent talks surrounding the controversial 11-Pines development, which originally included hundreds of apartments and single family homes, with nine holes of golf. Located

at 11 Mile Road and Halsted, the 92-acre property includes a 23-acre, contaminated landfill.

In addition to disseminating information through its newsletter, COHA invited Department of Environmental Quality project specialist Steve Kitter to speak at a general meeting held last month at the Farmington Hills Library. Kitter explained the tests that had been conducted on the landfill and answered a raft of questions from concerned residents.

"I think it's the big issues that get people's attention," Spring said. "If there's something really out of the norm ... we will go in support of the residents in the area."

COHA also keeps a close eye on city-wide issues. Spring's predecessor, Fran Valley, said members contributed to the drafting of a cellular tower ordinance that elected officials have touted as one of the toughest in the country.

Members also contributed to the discussion when city officials revised their planned unit development ordinance, which allows different types of develop-

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—COHA president

ment — like a mix of commercial businesses and homes — on one property. Some, like Valley, have become familiar faces at council and commission meetings.

"The biggest thing about COHA is a conduit of information," Spring said. "I think there's been a lot of information exchanged between the city and residents that would otherwise not have taken place."

Much of that information is collected by members first-hand. COHA representatives serve on the Multi-Racial

Multi-Cultural Commission, Planning Commission, Beautification Commission and a public safety committee. Valley said involvement in meetings, committees and commissions has also helped promote the organization.

"Cable's been a real blessing for us," she said. "You see a representative of COHA speaking on the issues, it gets you wondering."

Oftentimes, neighborhood groups are drawn to the larger organization in times of crisis. In Valley's subdivision, a development battle led residents to

meet with a COHA representative, who showed them how to organize.

"I think we're a wonderful resource," she said. "We know the rules, the history and the contacts, and we're willing to work with these groups."

Anyone interested in COHA membership has several avenues to contact the organization. The last general meeting before a summer hiatus will be held at 7 p.m. on May 16, at the Farmington Hills Library on 12 Mile Road, west of Orchard Lake Road. The public is welcome to attend.

Past agendas have included topics such as homeowners' insurance, subdivision by-laws, water issues, cellular towers and presentations by city staff members. Regular reports about schools, police and public safety and planning issues are received.

To join by mail, send the association your name and address, and a \$35 check to COHA, P.O. Box 3417, Farmington Hills, MI 48333. The group also maintains a web site at www.farmilb.org/COHA.

RECREATION NEWS

SPRING SALE

It's time to sign up for the Spring Clean-up Sale on Saturday, April 29 at Heritage Park Day Camp Building.

Call 473-9570 for more information.

OPEN GYM

The Costick Activities Center Gym in Farmington Hills offers the following activities and times: Adult Basketball, 7:30-9:03 p.m. Thursdays and 9-11 a.m. Sundays; Teen Basketball, 3-5 p.m. Saturdays and 1-3 p.m. Sundays; Adult Volleyball, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Family Gym and Swim, 12:03-3 p.m. Saturdays.

The cost to participate for residents 17 and under is \$2 and \$4 for non-residents. For 18 and over residents pay \$3 and non-residents pay \$5. For more information contact the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services at 473-9570.

ADULT SOFTBALL

New team registration is currently under way. First come first serve. Call 473-9570.

SAND VOLLEYBALL

Adult Sand Volleyball leagues are now being formed. Call the Recreation Division at 473-9570.

PUBLIC SKATING

Public skating is available at the following times:

Lunch skate Monday-Friday,

11:30 a.m.- 1:20 p.m.; Tuesday and Friday, 7-8:50 p.m.; Saturday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:20 p.m.; Sunday, 4-5:50 p.m.

Sign up for derby

Farmington's annual Trout Derby will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 29 at Shiawassee Park.

Children 14 and under can preregister in person and pick up fishing rules at the City of Farmington Hills Special Services Department. Registration is limited to the first 500 children and will take place unless severe weather threatens.

TROUT FISHING

This event is for Farmington and Farmington Hills residents only and no fishing license is required.

Participants must sign in on the morning of the Derby at the tent near the tennis courts upon arrival at the park.

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