

City council wants to revise licensing rules

BY JONI HUBERD
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After a series of meetings with business leaders, Farmington Hills officials are considering a change to the city's rules for licensing businesses.

The revision would essentially repeal the existing business licensing ordinance, except in six specific categories that directly affect public health, safety and welfare: amusement and entertainment, massage parlors, animal, solicitors, auctions and vehicles for hire. Those businesses will still be required to obtain a city license; however, other businesses will not.

City officials have said the entire licensing ordinance is outdated, because it was drafted in the 1970s. It doesn't apply equally to all businesses and is often misunderstood.

The city council will consider approving the repeal at their June 19 meeting.

"(City Clerk) Kathy Dornan and I have discussed this problem for a number of years," City Attorney John Donohue said. "The existing ordinance didn't include a lot of businesses in operation now, because there weren't those kinds of businesses when we incorporated as a city ... for instance, video stores," Dornan said.

"Plus, people misunderstood the concept of a business license," Donohue added. "If a customer got into a dispute, they'd call us to complain."

The licensing code, as it stands, doesn't give the city any real authority to regulate businesses and wasn't designed to produce revenues, Donohue said. All it required was that a business file for the license and display it in a public place.

It's not even a good way to gather information for a data base of new and existing businesses, he said, because not everyone is required to apply. For instance, video stores didn't exist in the 1970s, so they aren't

required to obtain a license.

While council members haven't approved it, the amendment passed muster with the Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce in May. City staff members have been working with the chamber's Government Affairs Committee for several months to finalize the proposed modified ordinance.

Initially, they also discussed an ordinance requiring businesses to register with the city by filling out a form, but that's no longer under consideration, Dornan said.

"The chamber was telling us why should they have to pay another fee and fill out another

form, if we could get the same information from other sources," she said.

While she sees a benefit of having businesses register with the city, Dornan understands why businesses don't care for the idea.

"It would be easier for us, but would it be easier for business? Probably not," she said.

Farmington Area Chamber Director Carlisle Flaherty said business owners appreciated the city's willingness to work with them to modify the existing ordinance.

"We appreciate the fact the city wanted to come and seek input from the business commu-

nity," she said. "I think what we've come up with will, in fact, streamline the ordinance and make it more understandable for city staff and the business people who are required to follow it."

She said in addition to fees and questions about the need for a business registration program, chamber members were concerned over how much information they would be asked to provide, such as home contact numbers and addresses and the names of corporate officers.

The city attorney's office is not recommending a registration program at this time, Donohue said.

Armed with grant, Botsford Hospital targets teen smoking

With the school year ending and the long, hazy days of summer beginning, most youngsters will have more free time on their hands. Botsford General Hospital is working to make sure that those idle hands don't pick up a

cigarette.

Botsford General Hospital has been awarded a \$16,000 grant co-funded by the Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan. The grant will support

the development and expansion of smoking cessation programs and services specifically targeting high school students in the Farmington school district.

This program is piloted at Farmington High School with

the support of Debbie Warner, medical skills teacher.

"We're excited to have the opportunity to design programs targeting teen smokers as well as to help students avoid a deadly habit," said Margo Gorchow, administrator, hospital and com-

munity relations. "We are committed to preserving health and wellness of our children for the future of our community."

For the past three years, Botsford and Farmington schools have been involved in planning and implementation of various

efforts to address the health and health-related concerns of Farmington area students.

The 18-month program will occur in three segments that coincide with the district's September to June school year.

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