

Building owner wants to bump empty space

BY TIM SMITH
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Michael Loisel owns a vacant commercial building on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington. But he isn't a "big land baron" who can afford to go for any length of time without having a tenant.

That is why Loisel is requesting a special exception use from the Farmington Planning Commission so that a prospective tenant can open up a frame and bump shop at 22855 Orchard Lake, north of Grand River. The property is zoned for lower-intensity use.

The building became vacant in December, when Harmon Glass left the 5,000-square-foot facility. Two prospective tenants decided against signing up, said Loisel during Monday night's planning session, when he presented his request.

"I'm not a big land baron," said Loisel, a Novi resident who works a job in Southfield. "This

is a big loss to me financially. ... I need a tenant."

Loisel, however, found there wasn't much support from the commissioners or other city officials at the meeting, who are concerned a bump shop would become a hard-to-regulate eyesore not compatible with the surrounding area.



Space for rent: Michael Loisel hoped to rent this building to an auto body repair business.

Loisel will resume his bid during a public hearing scheduled for the 7 p.m. Monday, April 9, commission meeting at Farmington City Hall.

Issues include the noise of work and the storage of vehicles awaiting to be repaired. The suggestion of putting up protective fencing on the Mooney Street side of the property was shot down by Commissioner David Gronbach, among others.

"I don't want a salvage yard," Gronbach said. "That's something this commission is not going to allow."

The facility is near Belle Tire and Midas and is adjacent to The Tree House business.

"No one enjoys your business space being empty," said commissioner William Burke.

"I sympathize with what you want to do," added commissioner Alton Bennett, who recalled another city where a bump shop "turned into quite a mess" in terms of code enforcement.

SWOCC plans for expansion

The Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission has purchased a building for about \$500,000 that will more than triple its office and studio space.

The building is on Nine Mile Road near Farmington Road, across the street from Farmer Jack. The sale is expected to close this week.

Once renovations of the former body shop are complete, SWOCC will have about 10,000 square feet, which compares favorably to the organization's current 3,000 square feet near Grand River and 10 Mile Road.

With a bigger studio and more editing bays, SWOCC's new facility should be comparable to the TV facilities at North Farmington High School, said Video Operations Manager Eric Angott.

Currently, Angott said,

SWOCC facilities are "not even close" to what the high school has. To help design the new facility, SWOCC has hired Dirk Koning, the director of the Grand Rapids Community Media Center, as a consultant.

Koning has taken the Grand Rapids operation from a \$50,000/year public access cable television station to a \$2 million per year operation including two television stations, a radio station, a computer center, civic network, media archive center and research institute, according to the organization's Web site.

Koning recently guided the Community Media Center in a \$3 million relocation project to a rehabilitated building in the oldest neighborhood in Grand Rapids.

Feldman from page A1

"I'm surprised (about her announcement) because it matters so much to her and she loves it," said Maxfield, about Feldman's dedication to serving the district. "But I'm not surprised that she's worked so hard to get her social work degree. She felt her career has to be the higher priority right now."

Like a family

Feldman, on Wednesday, reiterated what she said during the meeting.

"Between family responsibilities and some very exciting new career opportunities, I didn't feel able to give the board all that I know it deserves," Feldman said.

She added that the district is "a family, and I'm going to really miss it."

The Farmington Hills resident's other family includes a son, Michael, who will graduate

this June from North Farmington High School, and a daughter, Stephanie, now attending eighth grade at Dunckel Middle School.

According to Feldman, there was no one accomplishment for which she could take personal credit. Instead, she talked about a number of new programs and decisions made as a team.

The biggest decision took place early during her first term, when the board hired Maxfield to succeed Mike Flanagan as superintendent. Current board members Jack Inch and Cathy Webb also worked on that crucial task.

"The greatest thing I was part of was hiring Bob Maxfield," Feldman said. "(The) changes of the last eight years are because of the type of leadership Bob has brought."

Not thankful

But Feldman did note several other important jobs taken on by the board since 1993. Those included the creation of the Mission 2007 strategic planning document, ongoing growth of technology, and the 1997 bond issue that resulted in the recasting of many district facilities.

In addition to the Livingston County 4C Council, Feldman intends to keep her eye on Farmington Public Schools. "I hope to remain involved in Farmington schools in some capacity if they need me," she said.

Feldman emphasized that serving the public has been a "tremendous" experience, a concept some friends have some difficulty grasping. "People say, 'Why do you do that, it's such a thankless job,'" Feldman said. "But I never felt that way."



Honored: Mayor Nancy Bates, right, gets a hug from Beau Papai of the Commission on Children, Youth and Families, after Papai presented Bates with the Governor George Romney Volunteer of the Year Award. The presentation came at the close of an event that combined the 5th anniversary of the after-school program and the Commission's annual volunteer recognition.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARBER

Drugs from page A1

locations in the city to get high - or "rolling," as they call it.

Farmington Hills' first rave party was to be held March 23, according to Assistant Police Chief Chuck Nebus. Kids from nine high schools were invited to a "dance party" at a local establishment, whose owner was told it would be a charity event.

When police got wind of it, they contacted the owner and the party was canceled, he said. Detroit police know there will be a rave held sometime in the near future; the location has been billed as a safe, legal venue in the suburbs.

A parent's "dream"

Raves jam hundreds of kids into warehouses or fairgrounds - any place there's room - where the beat of loud techno-music and flash of glow-sticks create an atmosphere rife with vibration and light, two elements that are always part of an drug-induced high.

Typically, the events are billed like a parent's dream: no alcohol, no weapons, security. But the tickets and flyers always include tiny letters or symbols that indicate what kinds of club drugs will be available, according to drug and alcohol recognition expert Ken Krygel, a Detroit police officer who retired after a 16-year-old drunk driver ended his career.

Krygel has studied the club scene, attending rave parties and talking to kids. He condensed what he's learned into a 45-minute presentation packed with information parents can use to determine whether their children are at risk.

A staple at rave parties, Ecstasy (MDMA or 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is. Kids who get high at raves may lose consciousness or go into convulsions. The toughest part of undercover training, Krygel said, was learning the code of silence.

"I had to learn to just walk around kids on the floor," he said. "If they go down, they get pulled to the side...If they go into convulsions, they take them out."

Kids who take Ecstasy experience dehydration and an increase in body temperature to dangerous levels. They'll suck on pacifiers to keep them from grinding their teeth and drink five to six bottles of water to stay hydrated.

"Light sticks and pacifiers should be considered drug paraphernalia," Krygel said.

The "hug drug"

An Ecstasy-high amplifies sensation and creates a sense of euphoria or peacefulness. At a typical rave, there's no fighting, no trouble and the kids clean up after themselves.

Krygel called the "hug drug." Krygel said, "You can be the doorknob kid...the straightest looking kid in school. At this rave, everybody's equal. Everybody loves everybody."

Lisa Pangrazzi, who works with kids recovering from substance abuse at Pathways Treatment Center in Southfield, said most of their current clients have been to raves. From an essay in which one teen talked about why he attended the parties, she read, "I found love and immediate acceptance. I felt as if I was in a whole different world going to raves."

Pangrazzi talked to another young man who felt a sense of belonging at raves.

"He felt like people at the rave were his family," she said. "He felt for the first time in his life that he fit in."

She said kids describe taking club drugs with an almost religious connotation, a sense of transcending the world in a spiritual or tribal sense. Krygel said kids who take ketamine, an animal tranquilizer referred to as "Special K," go into a trance-like state that brings them very close to death.

"When they go into the k-hole, they see death. They see the bright light," he said.

The most prevalent rave drug, GHB, is also one of the most dangerous. Easily made from household chemicals - including drain cleaner - it is odorless and tasteless and can be dropped into someone's drink without the person knowing it.

Some kids take it willingly, because GHB can magnify the effects of alcohol, Krygel said.

Tanks of nitrous oxide also show up at raves. Kids will huff balloons full of the gas, commonly used to calm patients during dental procedures.

Profits, dangers

While nitrous is relatively inexpensive, ecstasy runs \$20 to \$25 for each pill, which costs about 3 to 8 cents to manufacture, said DEA officer Richard Isaacson.

"Obviously, the profit margin is huge," he said. "You can see the motivation."

Isaacson said the DEA has seized as many as 20,000 tablets

of ecstasy at Detroit Metro Airport, on their way in from the Netherlands. The customs dogs there are trained to sniff out the drug.

The danger of club drugs, Isaacson said, is no one knows the long-term effects. But Dr. Cattellane stressed the short-term effects can be deadly.

"Kids can die from this," he said. "This is a potentially lethal problem."

Those who have taken the drug may be brought in by friends or parents who can't rouse them. The drugs depress respiratory efforts; those who take it may breathe as few as four or five times a minute, as opposed to the normal 10 or 12.

"Try breathing every 12 seconds...take half a breath. See how long you can do this," Cattellane said. "I've seen young people do this for 40 minutes or an hour at a time."

The drug also inhibits the gag reflex, which can cause death if a user vomits and aspirates stomach contents. He has seen female patients, alone or with a parent, who woke up in a strange place without their clothes on, unable to remember what happened.

"I have seen it at 8 Mile and Grand River," Cattellane stressed. "This community. Your kids."

Parents expressed concern over techno-music, commonly played at raves. Krygel said that was one of the signs that should cause parents to look for other signals - toys, glow sticks, pacifiers, butterflies, costumes or the smell of menthol often inhaled to enhance the drug's effects.

Parents who suspect their child is taking drugs can have tests done; however, the effects can be detected for only six to eight hours, Cattellane said.

Call to Action Executive Director Dr. Cattellane said Michaelson announced a new partnership with Concentra Medical Center in Novi, which is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day, except major holidays. For information, call 248-478-1616.

Dr. Cattellane said drug testing isn't necessarily done routinely in emergency rooms; however, he urged parents whose children were clearly under the influence to bring their children in for observation.

Michaelson said portions of the presentation will air on cable television.

Award from page A1

National Bank in Farmington Hills.

"I feel honored to get to come and meet with all of these people who contribute so much to the community," Lynn said.

Having served on the City Council since 1989, including an appointed term as mayor in 1993, Bates is the city's second directly elected mayor. She has served on numerous regional and national committees, and in 1993 was appointed by the presi-

dent of the National League of Cities to serve on the Human Development Committee. In 1998, she was asked to serve on the NLC's Blue Ribbon Committee for Children, Education and Families.

Bates established the Commission for Children, Youth and Families in 1993 and now serves as council liaison. In 1995, she initiated the Farmington Community Foundation, to secure on-going funding for after-school

youth centers she helped establish.

Because of her efforts with local youth, including assistance in establishing a Youth Council, Bates was invited to serve on the NLC Institute for Children, Education and Families' board of directors. She has supported the creation of a National Youth Council and has appointed young people to local boards and commissions.

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