

# Cairns enters plea for low-income senior housing

By MARY GNIEWEK

The poor and the elderly got a plug from acting City Manager Floyd Cairns Monday night.

He asked the Farmington Hills City Council to consider low income residents in the proposed senior public housing project the city hopes to build soon.

"I've lived here for 64 years, longer than any of you," he said. "I think it's about time our hearts went out to someone besides ourselves. Everyone here has a house to go to tonight, something to eat. So I think we ought to think it over. That's all I have to say."

Cairns' words were loudly applauded by a small group of citizens, including members present at Monday's city council study session. Council spent the evening discussing a bonding election slated for March 6 in which voters will be asked to approve sale of \$8 million in municipal finance bonds for senior public housing.

Project financing was also discussed. Commission on Aging Chairman Nancy Bates said a critical situation exists among Farmington Hills senior population.

"Many senior citizens must choose between food and medicine. They are living on fixed incomes," she said. "I

wish council would pursue HUD (Housing and Urban Development) funding. It is the only way these people will be helped."

**MAJOR EARL OPPERTHAUSER** said the city is trying to secure Richard Headley, who successfully spearheaded a tax limitation drive last November, to help with the senior housing push.

"I think it would be a great shot in the arm if Headley or members of his organization would give to the cause," Oppertshauser said.

The mayor also spoke about forming a steering committee of Commission on Aging, Building Authority and Hous-

ing Commission members to rally support behind the bonding issue.

"In the second phase of the game plan, we will try to obtain financial support to defray the cost of housing and get the rents down. There are tax limitation drives to be held in the community who could donate without hurting their pocketbooks," he said.

It is currently projected that rents will be \$350 a month for two bedroom units and \$284 for one bedroom apartments. Plans call for a 240-unit building on a 10-acre site at Drake and Freedom. The land was deeded to the city with the stipulation that part of it be used for senior housing.

Said councilwoman JoAnne Smith: "I think it is a mistake to go into a project of this magnitude asking for a handout. It is unprofessional."

"Asking for donations and forming a steering committee is admirable, but we can't kick the can down the road over and over again. I'm sure we can get federal aid for this project if we take it step-by-step and don't panic."

"Assume the units will rent for \$315 a month and we don't get aid. Would we be able to rent all the units? I don't want to be committed to an \$8 million project that won't fly."

Oppertshauser said the council's primary concern now is to get the bonding issue passed, then investigate avenues of funding, including HUD.

The city is also expected to begin talks with the Sisters of Mercy regarding rehabilitation of the Mercy Center for senior citizens at Eleven Mile east of Middlebelt.

## Senior chore problem tackling tough tasks

Seniors faced with a mound of snow and ice commanding their porch can gain a helping hand with Old Man Winter from the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Program's Senior Adult Chore Program.

The program, open to Farmington and Farmington Hills residents 60 and older, provides free chore services.

While domestic chores, such as preparing meals, housecleaning and washing dishes are excluded from the list of services, the program provides help with such heavy tasks as snow shoveling, yard work, washing windows and minor repairs.

Senior citizens and others skilled in home repair tasks are employed on a part-time basis by the program. The amount of time required to complete projects, move furniture and spread salt on icy sidewalks. Chipping the ice off the walks is avoided by the crews, according to Maggie Lordinas because the task might be dangerous to the workers.

### Brotherton says budget's tight

State Rep. Wilbur "Sandy" Brotherton (R-Farmington) reported this week that the next two years will bring fewer jobs and higher unemployment, but there will still be some improvement in Michigan's economy.

"The Governor's budget for the coming fiscal year is in excess of \$4.5 billion," Brotherton said. "The hue and cry is already being heard from all who depend on state revenues for their jobs and financial support."

Brotherton said there are strong indications already that a slowdown in the economy is underway. He cited the increased welfare load and the government.

### Hills student is tops

Deborah Jean Justice of Farmington Hills, a social science and education major, received distinguished student rank for the fall semester of the 1978-79 school year.

In order to qualify for distinguished rating, a student must have a grade index of at least 5.5 (B plus) of a possible 6 (A) in no less than 14 academic credit hours at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind.

Papering walls is among the chores the service won't accomplish. Employers won't fix household appliances, either.

**REPAIRS WHICH HELP MAINTAIN** the safety of residents will be done, according to Ms. Lordinas. These repairs include fixing handrails and cleaning gutters.

Low-income families will be given priority in the program which is supported by Farmington, Farmington Hills and the Area Agency on Aging.

Persons wishing to enlist in the service can call 474-1407 between 9 a.m. and noon on Mondays-Thursdays.

Once the request for the service has been made, Ms. Lordinas will visit the home to determine the extent of work to be done. After the work is completed a donation envelope is sent to the resident. Donations are left at the discretion of the resident, who isn't required to pay for the service.

Any donations received by the program will go toward financing the service, according to Ms. Lordinas.

**COUNCILMAN JOE ALKATEEB** said a market study should be conducted before the bonding election to determine if the project can be self-sustaining.

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