

Farmington Observer

Volume 91 Number 15

Thursday, December 6, 1979

Farmington, Michigan

86 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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New councilmen eye senior housing options

By MARY GNIEWEK

Three councilmen-elect vow they will try to meet the need for senior citizen housing in Farmington Hills when they take office next month.

The three, who based their campaigns on the defeat of the 264-unit senior citizen-low income family housing proposal at Freedom and Drake roads, favor a housing plan without government strings attached.

"The (city) council is going to have to back up a bit and look at the entire situation," said Donn Wolf, councilman-elect.

The entire situation includes a waiting list of 800 names at Baptist Manor, a privately-owned 351-unit senior housing development in Farmington Hills. The only other senior housing project in the city, Marian Oakland West, which has 50 units, has a waiting list of 200 names.

In neighboring Farmington, a senior housing development slated to open

next summer has a waiting list of 1,700 names, and only 153 planned units.

"This is a terribly important issue," Wolf continued. "We'll have to examine all of the alternatives."

Wolf and his cohorts, William Lange and Jack Burwell, cited another go at a municipal bond sale as one alternative method to financing a senior housing development in Farmington Hills. It would insure city control over the development, unlike the Freedom/Drake proposal where state guidelines dictated 54 of 264 units be used for family housing.

THE CITY COUNCIL shelved a housing-by-bonding plan last spring when studies indicated rents would have exceeded affordable rates for needy senior citizens.

Then city finance director Girard Miller's December 1978 study to city council reported average rents in the proposed 240 unit development at \$320,

or \$270 without a monthly utility allowance.

City administrative aide Michael Dorman said those figures could be debated. Mayor Earl Oppertbauer claims the rents in such a development could be as low as \$225 a month.

Regardless, voters defeated an advisory question on the Nov. 6 ballot which asked if the city should borrow \$8 million to issue bonds for building senior citizen housing.

A bond sale cannot be initiated without voter approval.

"Bonding has to be studied more

closely than before," Wolf said.

Burwell believes the bond proposal might have been supported if it had stood alone on the ballot, instead of one of several housing advisory questions.

"It was the package people rejected," Burwell said. "They said 'no' to everything."

"This issue is not dead by any means. I want a senior housing project in town," he said.

LANGE ALSO believes a bond sale "needs more exploration."

"Our campaign platform was to look at other forms of housing assistance," he said. "Definitely, the issue needs to be addressed and resolved."

Anita Herman, vice chairwoman of the Commission on Aging, an advisory group to the Farmington Hills council on senior citizen matters, said she will consider a study of all the alternatives offered.

During heated debates on the Freedom/Drake proposal, one council member said the Commission on Aging would work to defeat a housing devel-

opment sponsored by a municipal bond sale.

But Mrs. Herman gave no indication of that.

"We're not burning any bridges," she said. "We want to work with all who are interested in senior housing."

A Commission on Aging study just released reports 26 percent of the city's elderly households have annual incomes of less than \$6,000.

An estimated 3,589 elderly households in Farmington Hills will qualify for rental assistance in 1980, the report concludes.

Land donation for the elderly expires in a year

The City of Farmington Hills has one more year to make a promise of senior citizen housing a reality.

In December 1977, the city received six acres of land at Freedom and Drake roads as a gift from a local industrialist.

City officials were told that if they constructed senior citizen housing on that site within the next three years, an additional 5.3 acres would be deeded to the city.

After the November defeat of a 264-unit elderly housing proposal on the land located in the southwest section of the city, the Farmington Hills Council will go back to the drawing board on housing plans for that site.

"It's of no great concern to me now," said the industrialist, who wishes to remain anonymous. "It's an old thing. It's over with."

"I tried, that's all."

The donor explained that several years ago, he was planning to build an ice rink and sports center on the north-

east corner of Freedom and Drake roads, one of several pieces of property he owned locally.

"We had a tremendous zoning problem," he recollected. "The thing carried on through various committees, zoning departments and finally passed after three years."

"But in the meantime, the exact nature of the project was copied in West Bloomfield."

"Subsequently, another complication arose. We built a plant in Milford. Our funds dried up."

"I had a piece of land (at Freedom and Drake) and didn't know what to do with it."

The land gift was negotiated through City Clerk Floyd Cairns.

"We just decided to do it this way, that's all," the industrialist said, when asked why he requested senior housing on the site.

"I think they'll end up doing something there, anyway."

Library revamps children's room

The Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile Road in Farmington Hills will soon undergo a \$155,000 renovation project, jointly funded by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The Farmington City Council voted Monday to contribute \$25,498 to the project. The Farmington Hills City Council agreed last week to pick up the remainder of the cost.

"The two communities have worked well with one another in providing an excellent program of library services," said City Manager Bob Deadman, who recommended council approve the expenditure.

"We believe the need for improvement has been adequately demonstrated."

The renovation will include moving and expanding the children's section from the main floor of the building to the basement. In its place, an adult reading room will be constructed.

Library administrator Gordon Lewis told the council the children's section is inadequate to hold the book collection and the number of children who use the facility daily.

Members of both councils toured the library. They observed the building was not only inadequate in size, but the floor covering was in need of replacement.

In the lower level, the children's section will occupy an area remodeled by adding ceilings, floor covering and proper lighting.

The main thrust of the cost will be redecking the basement children's room at \$112,000. Carpeting and acoustical ceiling on the main floor will cost \$29,000. The remaining \$14,000 will be spent for architectural fees and furnishings.

The money will come from the city's unappropriated fund.



Farmington Hills and Novi fire fighters assist representatives from Gulf Oil Co. in pumping gasoline from the capsized tanker before it is removed. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Explosion averted Tanker mop-up shuts I-275 ramp

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

When a Gulf Oil Co. tanker carrying 8,600 gallons of gasoline slid off an entrance ramp to south I-275 near M-102 this week, firefighters used emergency procedures to contain a potentially dangerous situation.

The tanker evidently hit a patch of ice on the Farmington Hills ramp and slid off, according to the Michigan State Police Fire Marshal's office.

The tanker was within the 30 mph speed limit on the ramp when it hit the ice, causing the trailer to swing to the left and pulling the cab into the gully next to the ramp.

Truck driver John Wellman, 54, injured his knee slightly but was able to crawl out of the wrecked

tanker cab before Michigan State Police arrived.

When Novi and Farmington Hills firefighters arrived on the scene shortly after 11 a.m. Monday, they followed a routine designed for such incidents, according to Hills Fire Chief John Van De Voort.

The ramp was blocked to keep other cars away from the tanker, which was leaking fuel from its top. For a part of the early afternoon, firefighters were concerned over the vapors coming from the felled tanker.

A BID BY Gulf Oil representative Ray Glick to obtain a "Canadian bag" to cover the tanker's top and siphon off the fuel without exposing it to air failed when it was discovered that another company didn't have the equipment.

Both fire departments kept the number of its personnel on the immediate scene to a minimum. To reduce vaporization of the fuel into the air and thus the chances of the tanker igniting, the crews sprayed foam on the vehicle.

Water for the foam was provided by a truck from the Novi Fire Department and from a siphoning detail which blocked Haggerty near Grand River.

The next problem which faced the departments involved transferring the fuel from the downed tanker to two other trucks provided by Great Lakes Environmental Services in Roseville.

Draining fuel from the tanker flowed into a nearby drainage ditch. Oakland County Road Commission crews spread sand across the ditch

to prevent the fuel from flowing through the system.

The tanker was removed by 8 p.m. and the ramp was reopened to motorists by 11 p.m.

If the tanker had been carrying a poisonous gas, the fire department plans would have included clearing the area. That would have been accomplished through police public address systems mounted on cars and through the media.

SUCH EVACUATION would be voluntary, Van De Voort said.

While the area was being cleared of residents, fire fighters wearing oxygen units would attempt to patch the leak and remove the vehicle.

Monday's overturned tanker was the third such incident in the last three years, according to Van De Voort.

Where, oh where did water main go?

By MARY GNIEWEK

A phantom water main had Farmington Department of Public Works employees a bit perplexed last week.

A field crew dispatched to Shiawassee between Power and Prospect roads was supposed to tap into an eight-inch water main shown on city plans.

After a two day search, the crew discovered the 30-year-old plans were in error. No water main existed.

"We're not sure, but an alternate route may have been selected," said City Manager Bob Deadman.

"The field crew didn't pick that up. They looked at preliminary plans. In any case, it's not there and will have to be put in."

The case of the would-be water main precedes the career of any current Farmington city official. They can only guess on what happened.

"The water main was supposed to be constructed to serve the Bell-Air Subdivision," said DPW Director Earl Billing.

"Plans show an eight-inch line was put in on the south side of Shiawassee. It was the contractor's responsibility to have it installed."

"It was certainly a misunderstanding," the phantom water main was listed on city records. Construction permits were issued.

"THERE ARE times when the department of health issues a permit for construction but the developer or city doesn't approve issuance of monies," reasoned Frank Papke, city engineer.

"The best records available are old plans. But who guarantees old records?"

Papke, who became consulting engineer for Farmington in 1961, said the city probably had a very limited staff in 1950.

"(Inspection) was left up to the developer."

The snafu was discovered during

work on a \$1 million water improvement program undertaken by the city to upgrade its fire protection system.

UP Construction Co. of Wilcox was contracted for work along the strip in question. The crew had planned to tap

into the water main while installing a new one along Shiawassee.

City council will be asked to approve funds — between \$30,000 and \$40,000 — to make the phantom water main a reality.

Two men arrested for shoplifting

Two Detroit men were arraigned in Farmington District Court Tuesday on charges of shoplifting.

Theodore Otis Roberts and Theodore Neal Fancher, both of Detroit, were each released on \$5,000 personal bond.

They were charged with larceny and possession of stolen goods.

The two are charged with taking \$203 worth of clothing and shoes from T.J. Maxx, Hill or Miss, and Payless Shoes, all located in the former Federal's department store in downtown Farmington.

The incident occurred Monday.

A preliminary examination is scheduled December 14 in district court.

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