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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 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 the bit and look at the entire situation," said Don 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.

The 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 Dornan said those figures could be debated. Mayor Earl Oppenhauser 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 is to be studied more

carefully 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 development 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 developer.

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 254-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 great concern to me now," said the industrialist, who wishes to remain anonymous. "It's an old thing. It's over."

"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 recollects. "The thing carried on through various committees, zoning departments and finally passed after three years."

Meanwhile, 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 \$25,469 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 brunt of the cost will be reducing 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.

tanker cab before Michigan State Police arrived.

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.

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By MARY GNIEWEK

A phantom water main had Farmington Department of Public Works employees at 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 had to 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 preceeds 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 Billings.

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

The main was discovered during

"Plans show an eight-inch line was put in on the south side of Shiawassee. It was the contractor's fault for not upgrading its fire protection system."

"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," read a letter from Frank Papke, city engineer.

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

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

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The main 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 Wilson 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.

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

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

The incident occurred Monday.

A preliminary examination is scheduled December 14 in district court.

Where, oh where did water main go?

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