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Hills Council elects Wolf as mayor

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

After serving one year as a Farmington Hills council member, conservative Republican activist Donn Wolf was named mayor during this week's legislative session.

He was elected by his council colleagues to succeed Mayor Joann Soronen, who stepped down after serving one year in that post. She will continue as a council member.

Serving as Wolf's backup will be Councilman Joe Alkateeb, elected

mayor pro-tem.

In his acceptance speech, Wolf focused on development of senior-citizen housing, taxes, special-assessment districts and community relations as areas of concern during his tenure.

"The mayor represents this community. I'll do all I can to make you proud," he told those in attendance.

Wolf's election represents the final stage of the council's philosophical turn to conservatism, which began three years ago with the election of Alkateeb. Last year, Wolf, along with council

colleagues Jack Burwell and William Lange, wrested the majority away from the moderate council by defeating liberal Councilwoman Joanne Smith and moderate Councilman Keith Deacon.

Also defeated in that election were Republican moderates Cathy Jones and Shirley Stadler.

All those defeated were in support of the government-subsidized low-income and senior-citizen housing units proposed for construction on Freedom and Drake. Burwell, Lange and Wolf were

squarely against the project, which was later scrapped.

Only Councilwoman Jan Dolan survived the conservative onslaught. She supported the project.

Wolf, a Detroit Edison executive, served as the Oakland County campaign chairman for President-elect Ronald Reagan.

SAYING that he was being considered for an undisclosed position in the Reagan administration, Wolf told his followers that it was only a possibility

and he had told administration officials he desired to stay in Farmington Hills to fill out his term as mayor.

After this year, Wolf still will have two more years to serve on the City Council.

Wolf lauded Soronen's leadership, saying she had developed the council into a working team after coming through the heated 1979 political election.

"She has brought us together. This council will be successful in whatever it takes," he said.



DONN WOLF



Winter traffic jam

Snowsuits and sleds were bumper to bumper Tuesday at the hill on Shiawassee and Farmington Road. To learn how to dress for winter sports, turn to Page 3A.

Act revisions may close door to the public

By MARY GNIEWEK

Legislation that would allow city councils and school boards to shift personnel matters now discussed in public into the private arena is pending Gov. Milliken's approval.

Senate Bills 1143 and 1296, proposed revisions to the open meetings act of 1976, passed both houses before holiday recess.

SB1296, sponsored by Sen. David Plawecki, D-Dearborn Heights, would allow an evaluation of job performance of a public employee to be held in a closed session. That bill passed both houses by sweeping margins.

The victory for SB1143 was much narrower.

Introduced by Sen. Richard Allen, R-Alma, it would allow councils and boards to interview applicants for school superintendent, city manager or other public office in private as long as a final decision on hiring was made in public.

Farmington School Board trustee Michael Shpiece attacked both bills as a way of increasing secrecy in local government.

"Regular citizens won't be allowed to question candidates," he said.

"Some boards, including Farmington, have interviewed (candidates) for office in public and those decisions have tended to be good ones.

"THE BILL ISN'T clear as to whether the final decision must be made in public," Shpiece continued. "Maybe just the final motion is all that will be required in public."

At least two foes of SB1143, Reps. David Hollister, D-Lansing, and Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, have written letters to the governor pleading for a veto.

Plawecki is also opposed to SB1143. "He feels it's in the public interest that these interviews be in public," his aid, Sue Sherbow, said.

"We feel Sen. Allen's bill isn't what the open meetings act is about — to keep the public aware."

"In our bill, we're only suggesting evaluation of performance can be discussed in a closed meeting."

Farmington-area representatives, Sen. Doug Ross, D-Southfield, and Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington, voted for both bills.

Ross called the legislation "fairly limited."

"Under the law all interviews, even initial for school superintendent or city manager, had to be public," Ross said.

"The difficulty was that in some municipalities, it acted as a deterrent to getting the best people to apply. They didn't want their employers to know



DOUG ROSS

they were applying elsewhere.

"The compromise is that the interview, not the hiring, for a position can be done in a closed meeting if the person seeking the interview requests it.

"THE ACTUAL DELIBERATION by a council or school board and the vote must continue under all circumstances in an open meeting accessible to the public."

Brotherton also supported the bills. "An average person going to work for a city has a private interview with a department head," he said.

"I can't see why in hiring a key person, the applicants shouldn't be entitled to the same right. The final decision will still be made in public."

Farmington Mayor William Hartsock hopes the bills pass.

"It's a timely subject in Farmington since we're discussing replacement of Warren Buckler," he said.

Buckler resigned from the City Council on Jan. 5.

"The open meetings act contributes to openness and community awareness but hinders employee relations," Hartsock said.

"Four of us on council have different ideas of who we'd like to see appointed. We may toss out four names.

"It could be embarrassing for the three who aren't chosen."

The bills were among 83 passed through the state Legislature in the closing session.

Once the governor views the as-yet unprinted bills, he will have 14 days to sign or veto them.

\$55,000 replacement

Sewer station planned for city

The city of Farmington will spend about \$55,000 this year to replace a sewer lift station that has been a maintenance and pollution problem for the past decade.

Farmington City Council on Monday authorized replacement of the Twin Valley Sewer Station, servicing properties on Shiawassee, the Twin Valley Subdivision and 10 Mile Road.

The funds will come from the city's 1980-81 water-and-sewer-improvement budget and won't affect water rates paid by consumers.

The Twin Valley station lifts sewage to a sewer main on Shiawassee and Warner.

Whenever the lift station fails, sewage overflows into the upper branch of the Rouge River, which flows through Farmington City Park.

Each time the station breaks down, city personnel find it difficult to get replacement parts.

"There have been cases where we had to have parts manufactured, which has taken anywhere from two to six weeks," Robert Deadman, city manager, said.

"During this waiting period — anywhere from two to six weeks — sewage from the station has flowed directly into the river."

The failures of the station became so severe in 1975 that city engineers were ordered to develop an alternate method of lifting sewage.

THE ENGINEERS designed a wet well equipped with grinder pumps and city administrators stalled the project, hoping that the Environmental Protec-

tion Agency would include replacing the station as part of a federal grant program.

Continuing failures in the operation of the station finally led to Monday's action by the City Council.

"Currently, the station hasn't operated for six weeks," Deadman said. "The sewer department has spent weeks attempting to find replacement parts so the station can be placed back in service."

The station was installed when the Twin Valley Subdivision was approved in 1957.

A concept of the type of pump station to be constructed was designed by Kenneth Oscarson, an engineer affiliated with Orchard, Papke, Hillz and McClinton.

Oscarson's \$55,000 estimate is what

the city is basing its costs on.

Deadman, however, said he hopes to complete the project for a lower price. Bids will be taken and work on the project will probably begin in the spring.

The new station would save the city \$120 a month in electrical energy. The present station expends \$230 a month in electrical costs, which would be more than cut in half.

"The continuing failure of the existing station will not be tolerated in the long run by the EPA," Deadman said.

The city presently operates two other lift stations which use grinder pumps. "We've been able to maintain these stations with a minimal amount of down time or expense to the system," Deadman said.

More tickets, less accidents in 1980

Police spokesmen for Farmington and Farmington Hills attribute stepped up enforcement to lower traffic accident rates in 1980.

The death toll rose but traffic accidents were down 9 percent in Farmington Hills last year.

There were 11 fatalities in 1980 as compared to eight in 1979. Three of the deaths were related to alcohol. One was attributed to an epileptic seizure suffered by the driver.

None of the fatal accidents occurred at the city's major intersections. In fact, all of them occurred at least 200 feet beyond the range of any intersection.

"The number of accidents was down for the year because enforcement was up," said Lt. Ernest Miller, Farmington Hills traffic division.

Statistics through the end of November show 1,591 accidents occurred in the city in 1979. There were 1,462 accidents through the end of last November.

Figures for December aren't compiled yet.

"We've had a 20 percent increase in the number of violations issued," Miller continued.

number of tickets written at accident scenes.

The force recently added another traffic officer. Four patrolmen and one sergeant patrol city streets daily.

"OUR PRIMARY EMPHASIS now is the expressways and the major intersections," Miller said.

Middlebelt from 8 Mile to Northwestern Highway is the worst road; five of the city's top 10 high-accident intersections are located along that stretch of roadway, Miller said.

"It's heavily traveled and two-lane. And the road widening on Orchard Lake contributed to more traffic on Middlebelt last year," he said.

More tickets also resulted in less accidents in the city of Farmington, where statistics were less dramatic.

Although there was a 5 percent decrease in the number of accidents (685 in 1979; 550 in 1980), there were more injury accidents and more private property damage accidents in 1980 than the previous year.

The lone fatality occurred at Shiawassee and Power when a 20-year-old victim traveling at a high rate of speed crossed the center left lane, hit another car and then smashed into a utility pole.

Farmington public safety officers issued 29 percent more violations in 1980 than the previous year — a total of 3,245 tickets through the end of November 1980.

"The department has put an emphasis on selective enforcement of accident prone intersections, like Farmington and 9 Mile," said Lt. John Santomuro, Farmington public safety.

Participants will view a full moon and notable winter stars, including Sirius, Rigel, Pollux and Regulus, says Kathleen Dougherty, Oakland County parks naturalist.

Beginning at 7 p.m., the program is designed to create added experiences for the cross country skiing public.

The program will take place on foot if snow conditions prohibit skiing, says Dougherty.

Interested skiers are asked to dress warmly and to bring their own equipment as there are no rental facilities at the park.

"Astronomy on Skis" is the second in a series of programs on cross country skiing offered by the parks naturalist.

The third program is "Owl Search on Skis" on Feb. 13.

More than 16 kilometers of groomed trails are also available for open skiing at Independence Oaks daily from 8 a.m. to dusk.

Pre-registration is required for both programs. A non-refundable fee of \$1 per person will be charged to participants. Interested persons may register by phoning 859-0903 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Independence Oaks is located on Sasabaw Road, two miles north of I-75 in Clarkston. For more information, phone 859-0903.

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Detroit's Ever Exciting Auto Show starts this Saturday, January 10 at Cobo Hall.

See today's special section, "Excitement '81" for a preview of this year's events.