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Historical benefit splits community

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

The price of tickets to a \$100-per-person banquet and ball scheduled May 22 to benefit the new Farmington Historical Museum has become a controversial issue among persons who have already donated time and money to the project.

The event is the 1870 Governor's Ball sponsored by the Farmington Lions Club as a fund-raiser for the restoration of former Michigan Governor Fred Warner's historic home on Grand River as the site of the Farmington Historical Museum.

Patrons of the museum who attend the ball and banquet are expected to dress in styles of the late 19th century and ride in horse-drawn carriages from

the candlelight banquet on the museum lawn to the ball that follows in the Masonic Temple, the city's former town hall.

The \$200-per-couple cost for tickets to the benefit and the additional cost to rent or buy period costumes is a sore point with many members of the community who support the museum but feel the banquet and ball will exclude all but the affluent.

"I think the price of the ticket is too high," says Nancy Leonard, secretary of the Farmington Historical Commission. "I can't afford \$100."

Margaret Walker, chairman of the historical commission, emphasized that the public is invited to attend at no cost the museum dedication ceremony to be on the lawn of the Warner mansion at noon Saturday, May 22. But a light

luncheon following the dedication ceremony will be open only to invited dignitaries.

THE FOLLOWING DAY members of the community are invited to an open house of the museum at no charge and an old-fashioned ice cream social to be held after the Sunday dedication of the herb and rose gardens on the museum grounds. While Sunday the event is free, there will be a charge for the ice cream at the social.

Complaints about the festivities surrounding the museum dedication generally pertain to the price charged for persons attending the 7 p.m. banquet and 9 p.m. ball. Many in the city say they worked hard to renovate the home for use as a museum but will be unable to celebrate its grand opening.

"It leaves a question to me as to whose benefit this benefit is for," says JoAnne McShane of Farmington, past city council candidate and administrator of Domicile Center homes for the retarded.

"Now, some might say 'Go on, put on your own benefit, set your own prices.' They'd probably be right in criticizing me for criticizing them. But I just think what they're doing is exclusionary. A lot of people who played an important role in the establishment of the museum won't be able to attend. I can't pay \$100-a-plate, so I'll be excluded."

"Perhaps we could put on a Pauper's Ball as an alternative."

CO-CHAIRMAN of the Lions Club project, Don Adams of Farmington, owner of the Cozy Cafe, says he's heard

similar complaints and doesn't understand the problem. Some of the those complaining loudest, Adams says, are members of the historical commission who think they should be admitted free to the banquet and ball.

"They're the soreheads about the thing," Adams said. "It has nothing to do about money. They feel they've been left out. I find the complaints hard to believe — especially the source (of complaints). I'm telling them the same thing I'm telling you. We're out to raise money for the museum. One of the problems in this town has always been that when somebody tries to do something somebody else tries to put it down."

Adams compared the situation to a political fund-raiser. Someone who knocked on numerous doors and passed

out countless pamphlets stumping for Ronald Reagan would still have to pay \$500 to attend a fund-raising dinner held in the candidate's honor.

The other co-chairman of the 1870 Governor's ball, Walter Koning of Farmington Hills, says the benefit "was not created as a thank-you event for all the people who've worked on the museum but an event to raise money for the museum trust fund."

IN DEFENDING the club's decision to charge the \$100-per-person donation to the affair, Adams and Koning say a lower admission would only attract more people than the museum grounds could accommodate and force the club

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Blumberg battle rages on in health department

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Still another chapter is emerging in the continuing saga of the owner of a Farmington nursing home versus a nonprofit mental health services agency.

And it's the last chapter, according to the owner of the Oak Hill Nursing Home, Edwin Blumberg, who said he has "won" the fight. But former Detroit councilman Kenneth Cockrel, attorney for the nonprofit agency — Geriatric Screening and Outpatient Service, disagrees vehemently.

The conflict arose last summer when a representative from Geriatric Screening was denied access to Oak Hill. According to Blumberg, the agency "did not meet the requirements of the law."

The agency had begun providing free ongoing mental health therapy to nursing home residents in the tri-county area March 21, 1980, following its accreditation by the Michigan Department of Public Health.

Both Blumberg and Geriatric Screening filed complaints with the health department after the nursing home owner refused access to Geriatric Screening.

A hearing Feb. 24 before the Department of Public Health initiated what both sides hoped would be the clarification of several issues surrounding the access rights of Geriatric Screening.

But the proceeding was abruptly adjourned after 30 minutes when administrative hearing officer and practicing attorney D. Dennis Dudley had to leave to attend to another legal matter.

The conflict deals mainly with civil liberties, according to Robert Bernstein, Geriatric Screening director.

"The issue is whether a person in a nursing home has the same right to freely receive mental health services as do people living in the community in their own homes," said Bernstein.

But from the perspective of Vincent Leone, acting attorney for the Department of Public Health, the point in question is whether Geriatric Screening qualifies to have access to nursing homes as an advocacy group.

"The department is concerned about any group going into nursing homes as an advocate and dispensing medical care in a situation where the administrator may not know about it, although he or she is responsible for patients," Leone said.

ALL ISSUES RECENTLY took a back seat to still another one, set forth in a letter signed by Dr. Bailus Walker, director of the health department.

Sen. to all licensed nursing homes and county medical facilities in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, the letter said access was granted to Geriatric Screening in violation of the Public

Health Code, which requires service organizations to be incorporated.

Geriatric Screening is a unit of the Neighborhood Services Organization, a nonprofit corporation providing counseling, legal assistance and emergency services to the aging.

"The letter was an act of absolute stupidity. It's just a hell of a way to run a railroad," said Donald Roberts, director of the Neighborhood Services Organization.

"We obviously think it calls for investigation."

"It's certainly a hair-splitting argument," said Cockrel.

"It's like arguing about the angles on the head of a pin. I don't think it means that much. The letter is legally and factually indefensible."

"Geriatric Screening never sought to conceal its relationship with Neighborhood Services Organization. No one had taken the position since they originally

were certified that their subsidiary relationship was in any way defective."

The health department's judgment calls into question the capability of the state Department of Public Health to provide procedural due process and fairness, Cockrel said. The pending issues raised by the parties have been short-circuited by this determination, he added.

Interestingly, Walter Kron, assistant attorney general, and Leone say the whole complaint is now moot, since "according to the law, their access was void and should never have been given out."

Leone said the hearing will be reconvened if Blumberg wants to pursue the complaint.

If that is indeed the case, Cockrel said, it is a staggering apparatus that the whole governmental apparatus and

Please turn to Page 4A

Drive launched to keep market

A petition drive started last week in a last-ditch effort to try to convince Borman Foods to keep its Farmer Jack store open in downtown Farmington.

At the same time Joanne Fellenberg was circulating petitions in the neighborhood around the store, members of the planning commission were mulling over a request from the company to rezone an 11-acre parcel on the southeast corner of Nine Mile and Farmington Road from office to commercial use.

Borman representatives have stated in past meetings that the existing store is too small to compete at 18,000 square feet. They are proposing building a 41,000-square-foot store in a center that would be joined by other businesses such as Perry Drugs and ACO Hardware.

A planning commission subcommittee comprised of City Councilman William Mitchell and planning commission members Shirley Richardson, Jim Abernethy and William Burke has promised to present its recommendation on the rezoning request next Monday, April 12, at the planning commission meeting in city hall.

The subcommittee could recommend no change in zoning or recommend one of two commercial zoning designations. A C-3 general commercial zoning would allow virtually any retail or wholesale commercial use of the property while the more restrictive C-2 zoning would prohibit outside sales such as auto sales and servicing, nurseries,

fast-food outlets and vehicle storage lots.

MANY DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS oppose the rezoning on grounds that it would route customers away from the already-sailing downtown section.

Noting that one of the businesses eyeing the 9 Mile and Farmington location is Perry Drugs, Harry Watson, owner of Godmar Drugs in downtown Farmington, said recently another drugstore would "just cut the pie a little thinner and before long nobody will be making anything."

City Manager Robert Deadman says there is little chance of persuading Borman Foods to keep their existing Farmer Jack open in the downtown area.

"Farmer Jack's has indicated this store, because of its size, does not fit into the company's future plans," Deadman said. "If Borman can find an alternative site, this store will be closed. If not, they'll continue to view the profitability of the store."

The food firm is interested in serving customers to the south and west of downtown Farmington, according to city officials.

All this talk of closing her favorite store has Fellenberg, petition circulator, up in arms.

"I DON'T CARE who runs the store as long as there's a food store there," Fellenberg said.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Horse sense

Talking about a horse of a different color: In the Farmington area on a recent spring day these two breeds were getting a lot of attention. Above Mike Whitson (left) and Kevin Fromhart work on this 1975 Pinto that is mounted on a Ford Bronco chassis. It took Fromhart six months and \$3,000 to put all this together. The other horse is of the more conventional sort and is owned by the rider Anne Hugler of Farmington Hills. Her mount, named Apache, is bound to give her hours of pleasure.

Hills health costs hiked 52 percent

Health-care costs for Farmington Hills city employees will skyrocket 52 percent effective May 10 due to a rate increase by Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

The increase translates to an annual health-care bill approaching \$500,000. Last year medical insurance cost Farmington Hills approximately \$300,000, up 28 percent from the year before.

"We were shocked. It's the biggest increase we've ever received," said Chuck Rosch, Farmington Hills finance director.

The hike is based on the amount of

benefits Blue Cross and Blue Shield paid out to city employees and their families last year, Rosch said.

Helen Scott, personnel office supervisor for Farmington Hills, attributes the staggering hike to "some bad experiences and a lot of health-care costs we had last year."

"It's not unusual. It's because of an increase in the cost of living, and some of it's just strictly additional increases in health-care costs," Scott said.

The city will be forced to dip into the general fund to pay premiums in May

and June. Health-care costs for the next fiscal year may have to be taken into consideration during the overall labor negotiations with the city's five unions, Rosch said.

"We're investigating ways to amend our coverage right now. We may become self-insured or go with a health maintenance organization or another carrier."

"It may have an impact upon the amount of wage increases, if any, for health-care costs," Rosch added. "We only have so much to spend." The city's health plan, which excludes optical and

dental coverage, provides medical insurance for approximately 185 employees and 15 retirees.

The retirees will be most adversely affected because they pay 100 percent of their premiums, Scott said.

Representatives from Blue Cross and Blue Shield refused to answer any questions regarding the Hills' insurance.

The city's review of its medical plan follows the recent layoffs of four city employees — three in the building department and one in the fire department.

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OUR PAPER GETS RESULTS!

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