

Major changes ahead for FHCC

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ing a whole package together and selling the membership."

FHCC's 260 regular members, 141 of whom live in Farmington Hills, overwhelmingly approved the plan developed by a group of the club's directors including Robert Davies, FHCC president and liaison to the advance planning committee.

With that victory won, club representatives took their plan to the city. They encountered little difficulty in convincing Farmington Hills officials a land swap would be mutually beneficial. The property exchange was proposed to the Farmington Hills City Council in early December, just a few weeks before councilmembers passed an ordinance approving it.

FARMINGTON HILLS' 2.6-ACRE salt-storage site, on DPW property west of Halsted and north of Howard, will become part of the new clubhouse site. In exchange, the city obtains a 1.8-acre abutting piece of property from

ing Enterprise Court, a cul de sac that intersects Halsted.

"They (club officials) originally came to us back in October with some preliminary thoughts. They were under some constraints (such as options to purchase adjoining land, one of which expired December 31)," said Assistant City Manager William Costick.

"We had a request from a neighbor, and we just tried to be a good neighbor."

For its part, FHCC has agreed to assume the cost of relocating the city's salt-storage building (\$14,000); install a driveway (\$8,500); relocate the DPW fence (\$2,000); remove an FM transmission tower owned by Oakland Community College (\$1,000); relocate electrical hookups and flood lights (\$1,000) and landscape the DPW site (\$3,000).

"This hasn't inconvenienced the city at all, and in the long run, it's beneficial to the city," said Farmington Hills Director of Public Services Thomas Blasek.

"The city is receiving slightly less land, but will now have the option at

any time of disposing of its property, potentially increasing the city's tax base," he said.

That option was non-existent in the past because the salt-storage site was to the rear of the DPW property with no access to or frontage on a road.

"THE COUNTRY CLUB had the whole thing well-thought out. It's to their benefit that they were able to exchange parcels, but when you analyze it, it was a 'win-win' situation for the city," added Blasek.

Reasoning of the exchanged properties and a five-year limit for completion of the land swap are stipulated in the ordinance. If at the end of five years the country club is not ready to build a new clubhouse, land will be exchanged anyway.

Construction of the new facility "is about two years down the road," estimates Glen Wood, FHCC's advanced-planning committee chairman and its former president.

Wood and Sheehan say the FHCC improvements will be an added drawing

card for high-technology firms and employees considering Farmington Hills as a base.

"If YOU LIVE and work in an area, you want a good country club — a place to entertain local business clients. Through our social membership program, Farmington Hills Country Club will provide the opportunity for members to take guests and prospects to lunch in a country-club atmosphere," they said.

Last year, high-tech companies such as the Robert Bosch Corp. and Holset Engineering were attracted to the community. Both are expected to begin operations soon.

But absent such firms, the city welcomes the FHCC improvement as "in keeping with the high quality of development expected from this area of the city," said Blasek in his recommendation to the council.

Agreed Costick, "having a country club is an asset to any city."

Body shop owner may close his doors

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for another late model car to \$104.

The high price of parts has put a dent in the Coppola's business.

"Our volume is down by at least half as compared to 1978," said Mrs. Coppola.

"Insurance companies pay you the money up front, and rather than get their car repaired, some people can use the money better in other ways. They feel it's not a good value."

According to Dennis Liphard, executive director of the Automotive Services Council, an organization of body and mechanic shops and towing companies, "The whole industry basically is suppressing the marketplace and destroying independence for all repair shops — and it's the good, reputable collision shop owner that's really suffering."

"The collision shop has always been under the suppression of insurance

companies, and the consumer is caught in the middle," he said.

An Auto Club of Michigan survey on auto part prices showed that between 1978 and 1980, the cost of replacing the hood of a Plymouth model jumped 78 percent, from \$193.24 to \$345.37 for parts and labor, Liphard said.

A similar ASC comparison showed a 1978 repair that totaled \$115.40 for parts and \$59.55 for labor. In 1980, the identical repair cost \$226.40 for parts, and \$51.31 for labor.

"That's a 96.18 percent increase in the cost of parts, and a 2.9 percent increase for labor," said Liphard.

"To build a \$10,000 car yourself by buying all the parts from a dealer would cost \$60-70,000," he added. Auto companies' efforts to offset losses incurred by decreased car sales partially accounts for the escalation in parts prices, Liphard said.

THE AUTO CLUB of Michigan, the

state's largest insurer, now reimburses claimants only for repair bills reflecting "the prevailing labor rate charged by competitive shops for auto repairs in the area," according to an Auto Club spokesman. The action was taken "to keep the lid on skyrocketing claim costs," he said.

In the past, the company authorized collision repairs at the shop of the car owner's choice.

"I looked at it from the consumer's viewpoint, and as an Auto Club customer, it bothered me to no end," said Liphard.

"If I went to a reputable shop to have my car repaired that charges more than the Auto Club is willing to pay, I have to pay the difference. That's not

what I bargained for when I bought insurance."

"If a shop owner has a substantial investment in a building, equipment and trained personnel and does better than average work, he has to confront the customer with paying extra. The average customer doesn't know this guy is going to do better work than the guy down the street."

CHANCES ARE the consumer will opt for the cheaper estimate, but "eventually, he'll pay for that poor repair job," said Liphard.

"He'll either pay in premiums, in trade-in value, or with his life. It's the average guy who's getting nailed, and he doesn't even know it."

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