

# Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 19

Thursday, December 15, 1983

Farmington, Michigan

84 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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## State gives thumbs up to Spicer proposal

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Barring unforeseen obstacles, Farmington Hills will be awarded a \$1.2 million state land grant to help purchase the \$2-million, 211-acre Spicer property.

"They (Farmington Hills) are on the list which the board (Michigan Land Trust Fund board of trustees) will be adopting in January," said Edward Hagen, MLTF staff assistant.

But the grant is still unofficial, at least until MLTF trustees adopt a resolution at their Jan. 11 meeting recom-

mending the matching grant for Farmington Hills. Final word will come when the state Legislature appropriates the money, sometime in late summer or early fall, Hagen said.

"Until the (state) Legislature approves it, it is getting a little more firm," said Douglas Gaynor, Farmington Hills director of special services. "The property does not belong to the city until we pay for it."

IF THE Legislature honors the MLTF recommendations and appropriates money for Farmington Hills' grant, purchase of the Spicer property will represent the culmination of a

long, hard-fought battle by community leaders to acquire a city park. The property is owned by Birmingham attorney Nicholas Spicer, who inherited it from his mother, naturalist Eleanor Spicer.

Farmington Hills officials have been keeping their fingers crossed since they were asked in November to reduce the grant request because the city's original \$1.6-million request represented about 15 percent of the MLTF's total funds.

Trustees told city officials that the trust fund could not afford the original 80-percent matching grant but would consider a 60-percent matching grant.

The state would pay 60 percent of the purchase price if the city could pay 40 percent.

To avoid losing their chance for the state grant, city officials last month added \$400,000 toward purchasing the acreage north of 11 Mile and west of Farmington Road. They also requested a smaller \$1.2 million MLTF grant.

The city's total share of the purchase price now tops \$800,000. But the total includes two purchase option payments. The first \$200,000 payment was made last March. Another \$200,000 payment is due in March 1984. Money for the option payments have already

been included in the city's capital improvement budget. The additional \$400,000 will also more than likely come from the capital improvement budget, although this money will have to be replaced because it would have been used to pay for such other improvements as drainage.

Hagen said the MLTF should have about \$14 million to dole out among 45 top priority projects, down from about \$2 under consideration in November. But he added that "two or three projects are still questionable."

IN RESPONSE to MLTF trustees' concern in September that Farmington

Hills planned use of the Spicer property was sketchy, city staff attached an addendum to the grant application outlining some of the planned park's immediate uses.

When the Spicer property is purchased, work could begin immediately on nature and cross country ski trails, a nature museum, an animal farm and perhaps a jogging trail.

Owned by the Spicer family since the turn of the century, the centrally-located acreage features wildlife, rolling hills and meadows, trees and a tributary of the Rouge River. Buildings on the estate include a historic estate house, farm house and three barns.

## Widening set for 12 Mile

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Federal money will help make the dream of widening 12 Mile in Farmington Hills come true.

"We did get approval for discretionary funds," said City Manager Lawrence Savage, referring to road improvement money available through the Federal Aid to Urban System Program (FAUS).

Under the program, federal money will pay for 75 percent of the estimated \$2 million price tag for widening and resurfacing the city's two-mile stretch on 12 Mile. The city, however, is expected to pay the remaining 25-percent share of road improvements. The project's costs are still "very rough" because engineering plans still have yet to be done, said William Costick, assistant city manager.

Plans call for adding a fifth lane along 12 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads. City staff have been filling in gaps on 12 Mile between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake roads, so that in portions of the thoroughfare will be a complete four-lane cross section. The entire two-mile stretch will then be resurfaced.

CITY OFFICIALS are expecting to receive the federal money early

in 1984 with construction scheduled to begin sometime next summer.

Although city officials have been concerned about 12 Mile's congestion, the Oakland County Road Commission did not have plans to solve the problem. But city officials in September asked road commissioners to apply for newly available federal highway grant dollars. Road commissioners agreed to apply for the federal money if the city paid all of the local share of the road improvements. Under federal highway grant programs, the county generally pays half (12.5 percent) of the local share.

"We agreed to pick up their (the county's) 12.5 percent," said William Costick, assistant city manager. "Normally the local share is split."

While 12 Mile is under the county's jurisdiction, the federal money is the only way the thoroughfare will be widened to accommodate increased traffic. Road commissioners generally base improvements on safety. The roads with the highest number of accidents usually get top priority.

Although a pedestrian was recently killed while walking along 12 Mile, near Harrison High School, most accidents, despite the congestion, involve property damage and vehicles, according to police officials.

## City seeks ideas for improvement

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

If you have any ideas for improving Farmington's two major parks or what type of recreation facilities should be added, city officials want to hear from you.

"We are looking for people to say what should be done," said Gerald Horner, Farmington assistant city manager. "What does the general public want?"

In the process of developing a new four-to-six-year recreation facilities plan, a newly appointed planning commission subcommittee decided to first find out from Farmington residents what are the deficiencies in the city's park system and what kinds of recreation facilities are wanted, Horner said.

For example, subcommittee members noted that parking at the City Park (on Shilwassee and Power roads) could be improved, as well as upgrading the baseball diamonds.

## Golf facility near reality

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

With the help of a long-awaited, more-than-\$100,000 matching grant, Farmington Hills officials are hoping to buy five acres of land abutting the San Marino Golf Course as the site for a 6,500-square-foot maintenance building.

"We want the consensus of the public before we put this in black and white," Horner said. "We want to know what the deficiencies and problems are and what improvements can be made."

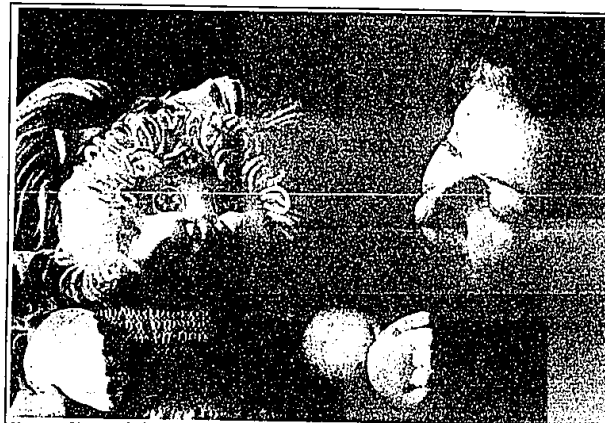
ALTHOUGH THE city has had a six-year park program, "a lot of things have been achieved" and it is now outdated, Horner said. "We are really starting from scratch again."

Once residents have offered their ideas, subcommittee members will "prioritize what the needs are" together with suggestions from other city officials, and develop a package listing the park system's deficiencies and long and short-range goals for improvement. How to finance the improvements would be determined after actual projects are determined, Horner said.

Residents may offer their suggestions in writing to Horner at the Farmington City Hall, 23500 Liberty, or by phone at 474-5500.

The 18-acre City Park on Shilwassee now includes softball fields, one which is lighted, two swing sets, picnic tables, and two lighted tennis courts. The park also offers a tot play area including a swing set, four plastic Fun-A-Muls, a Krazy Kup, Frontier Climber and a T-swing.

The 10-acre Drake Road park offers two tennis courts, two Little League diamonds, a lighted softball/baseball diamond, two swing sets, two slides and four plastic Fun-A-Muls.



Yvonne Chase admires one of her creations.

## Woman carves dent in holiday dollmania

Yvonne Chase is keeping busy this month delivering babies for area residents. But the Farmington Hills resident does not work in a hospital.

Instead, she creates her own customized versions of the popular Cabbage Patch Dolls in her dining room.

"People just go crazy when they see them," Chase said. "They know the doll has been personally made for them. The reaction people give you is what makes it so rewarding."

And, with the craze surrounding the soft sculpture dolls, Chase has received many rewards from satisfied customers, especially during the holidays.

"I didn't get into this with the idea of making a business of it, but people took to it and it just sort of ballooned," she said.

Chase's 360 creations differ from their Cabbage Patch cousins in several ways.

"I custom make the dolls for each person," Chase explained. "It's not like they went into a store and just picked it out. They can pick the hair and eye shade to match their child's. They can add freckles, birth marks or dimples. I'll add any peculiar thing that's not weird."

CHASE ALSO lets the new "parents" pick the name of their child. The store versions already have monikers.

The custom-made versions are also 21 inches

high and can wear any baby clothes currently on the market. The Cabbage Patch kids are 16 inches tall and are too small for standard clothes, she said.

Each Chase doll is hand sewn, except for the main seam, and takes 12 hours to complete.

"I put a lot of extra time and quality into this doll," she said. "I could make them faster, but then they wouldn't be reinforced or have hand-painted eyes. Even though it is tedious work I really enjoy making them. You start from nothing and make this little person. I like every one I make."

Surprisingly, most of the dolls Chase creates go to adults.

"A lot of women collect dolls to put on beds or in chairs," she said. "Only around the holidays do I make a majority of the dolls for children. They are just so cute they can't be resisted by any age. Even men like the dolls and buy them for their wives and children."

THE MAJORITY of the dolls produced are girls but Chase does create boys. Both sexes can be of any color.

Even though each doll has its own personality and different facial features, Chase is extremely pleased with one aspect of her dolls.

"I'm proud of my toes," she said. "No one makes them like I do. I'm so proud of my toes that I don't put shoes or socks on my dolls when they leave."

*'I didn't get into this with the idea of making a business of it but people took to it and it just sort of ballooned.'*

—Yvonne Chase



One of the finishing touches includes some freckles.

The sudden popularity of the dolls caught Chase by surprise, but she does have a possible reason for their success.

"A lot of dolls have lost their appeal because they are so mechanical and are all plastic. Mine are soft and can be ordered to specifications."

Chase has produced about 20 to 30 dolls for the holidays and is still taking orders. If the demand is too high, Chase plans to enlist the help of her sister and neighbors to produce the dolls.

"It may be faddish but people will always want dolls as long as little girls are here," she said.

## oral quarrel

## Does America have hunger problems?

Presidential adviser Edwin Meese created a stir recently when he questioned the seriousness of the hunger problem in America. He claimed that many people ate at soup kitchens "because the food is free and that's easier than paying for it." Those who feed the nation's poor have taken vigorous exception to the statement.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT PERSONS WHO EAT IN SOUP KITCHENS?

To answer this question, call 477-5498. You have until 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 16, to answer this question. Please speak clearly. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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*Yvonne to discover*

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