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Wolf spends most for council junkets

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills Councilman Donn Wolf, an avid anti-tax advocate, has put more on his city expense account since he took office than any of his colleagues, according to a recent analysis compiled by the city manager's office.

The five-year report shows that since his election in the 1980-81 budget year, Wolf has spent \$6,563. Total council expenses credited to the city since 1979-

80 have been \$18,778, according to the report.

Following Wolf as the biggest spender was Councilwoman Jodi Soronen who has chalked up \$6,139 since the 1979-80 budget year. Mayor Charles Williams placed third in overall spending with a \$1,980 expense account since 1981-82.

Council members' expense accounts became an issue at one of the recent Farmington Hills budget hearings when Councilwoman Joan Dudley

lashed out at Wolf for his spending habits.

DUDLEY QUESTIONED Wolf after he stated his belief that taxpayers should determine the city's tax rate rather than having it set by the council. But a week later, Wolf, during a telephone interview, brushed the issue aside as a personal thing on her (Dudley's) part. I think it was pushed out of proportion.

"I don't feel defensive about it. I feel

the money was well spent," he continued, adding he also spends his own money in addition to the expenses charged to the city.

"I certainly treat a conference very seriously. I think if you treat them seriously, the city gains from these things," Wolf said.

The report is an analysis of expenses of council members for attending conferences and workshops. Some of those include, for example, conferences sponsored by the Michigan Municipal

League (MML), National League of Cities (NLC), Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and the council's annual retreat.

Following Williams in total expenses charged to the city was Councilman Joe Alkatech with \$1,511 for the budget years 1979-1982. Councilwoman Jan Dolan who has been on council during the full five years of the report spent \$1,301.

Dudley, since rejoining council, has been listed as spending \$68. Council-

man Robert Anzlov, appointed in January, has spent \$149.

By far, the greatest expenses were charged at conferences sponsored by the National League of Cities, held in Atlanta, Washington and Los Angeles during the five-year period.

For example, in 1980-81, Soronen spent \$813 at the NLC conference in Atlanta including air fare, registration, hotel costs and other expenses.

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Manager eyes strategy for city's expansion

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

With two weeks to go before he takes over as Farmington Hills' city manager, William Costick already knows what lies before him.

"The biggest challenge is to begin implementing the capital improvement program and to find an acceptable solution to funding capital improvements," Costick said.

"No one wants to raise taxes. But it is an issue that is with us today, and it is an issue that needs to be addressed if we are to have a capital improvement program."

"That's number one. And I think the community needs to do that."

Although starting and paying for the capital improvement program will take a lot of planning, managing and organization, that's the type of work Costick says he enjoys.

ASSISTANT CITY manager since early 1981, Costick will take over when City Manager Lawrence Savage retires July 1.

Being a city manager, however, is a comfortable and fulfilling place for Costick. From Costick's college days, he was "attracted to the management of local government."

His first job after graduation from Michigan State University in 1966 was



William Costick

as an administrative assistant in East Lansing. Costick has a bachelor's degree in public administration and a master's degree in community development.

Costick moved on to city manager for Farmington, a Flint suburb, in 1971 until he became deputy city manager for Troy in 1978.

Costick, however, will admit he made "one wrong move" when in 1979 he began working for a private engineering consulting firm in northern Michigan.

"WHEN I was out of government for one year, there was a sense of loss of fulfillment. I did planning, grants and marketing and project coordinating for municipal clients. But it was a time when the economy was on a downturn."

"I missed the public sector. I missed being close to city management."

The next year, Costick arrived in Farmington Hills and returned to his chosen field.

"I came with the thought that maybe some day I would have the opportunity to be city manager knowing that at some point — Larry Savage had indicated within five years — he would retire. But, of course, I had no assurance."

NOW WITH opportunity before him, Costick said, he intends to maintain Farmington Hills as a "desirable community."

Costick's intentions in the years ahead include running the city "as efficiently and as business-like as possible."

"I hope we can continue to build on this city's approach of meeting with neighborhoods and groups to discuss projects in their neighborhoods," another of his challenges.

Many cities do not use informational meetings when dealing with new projects and problems, Costick said. But talking directly with the residents is an idea Costick wants to continue.

The same goes for a tradition established by Savage. City department heads have directions to deal directly with the public, to answer their questions and to keep them informed, Costick said.

THE PUBLIC, he said, is part of the challenge of working in city government.

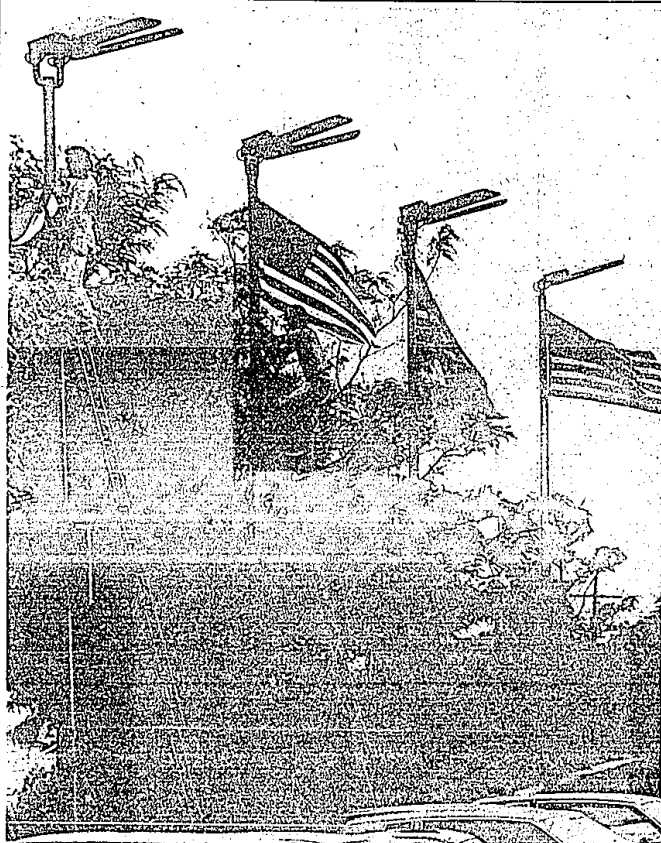
"It's indeed a big challenge working with people to see the community develop as people want it to. And to provide the level of services people request with the resources we have."

Costick sees the fulfillment in his work "in terms of challenges."

"City government is diverse. You're involved in many areas. You have the ability to plan and, hopefully, to see the realization of your efforts."

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The flags surrounding Bob Sako Oldsmobile dealership on Grand River were taken down last week after Farmington Hills officials said they were in violation of the city's sign ordinance.

Auto dealer seeks relief from sign enforcement

By Steve Barnaby
editor

The battle of the flags edged up a notch this week as Farmington Hills auto dealers plan strategy to fight against restrictions on their banners.

Bob Sako Oldsmobile on Grand River, known for its gigantic American flag, has been forced by the city's zoning enforcement department to take down the rest of the several American flags around the dealership at the corner of Drake.

The American flags originally were raised to replace flag pole banners. At least one other Farmington Hills dealership, Bill Cook Buick, has resorted to the American flag in place of banners.

AND ALTHOUGH Bob Sellers, a Pontiac dealer across the street from Cook, refused to join the American flag cause, he is more than a little miffed over the recent strict enforcement of the sign ordinance.

Wishing to stay in compliance with the ordinance, Sellers removed his banners as requested by the city. But last week he got a call from the zoning department saying he was in violation of the ordinance because of radio aerial banners on the used cars he had for sale.

"We've reached rock bottom on this issue," he said. "I don't believe in garish displays. Our building is dignified. But we need merchandising up front," he said.

SELLERS IS reviewing the sign ordinance and either he or one of his representatives will suggest changes to the ordinance at this Thursday's planning commission meeting at 7:30 p.m. in city hall.

He particularly is concerned over the used car section of his dealership. Sellers averages 100 used cars on his lot which cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000, he says.

"How am I going to dispose of my

used cars?" he said. "How are people going to know which cars are which?"

Distinguishing cars may not be as easy as it seems, said Sellers. Besides the 300 new cars and trucks in his color inventory, approximately 100 cars are on the lot for repairs as well as 50 employees' automobiles and up to 30 customer cars.

FARMINGTON HILLS City Council member Joan Dudley, also the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, defended the ordinance enforcement.

"Selective enforcement can't be done. Zoning enforcement people shouldn't be selective; themselves. While one (dealership) may be in good taste, others may be sloppy," she says.

The planning commission will be reviewing the entire ordinance package on Thursday. The final decision on any ordinance are up to the city council.

Hills settles on new budget

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills taxpayers will be paying less of a city tax increase to foot the bill for a \$15 million 1984-85 budget than originally expected.

But that may not be the end of tax increases in Farmington Hills.

In two weeks, the Farmington Hills City Council is expected to discuss putting on the ballot a request for additional millage to pay for needed capital improvements, including the construction of a new police building.

In a 3-2 vote Monday council adopted the \$15 million budget, based on a tax rate of 8 mills. That's a 3-mill (approximately \$300,000) reduction from the original city administrator's budget proposal calling for a 6.2 mill levy.

Council members Joan Dudley and Donn Wolf voted against the 8 mill budget. Dudley favored the 8.2 mill budget. Wolf, a supporter of the Voters' Choice Amendment, refused to support any council-mandated tax increase. Instead, he prefers putting proposed millage increases on the ballot.

DESPITE A lower than expected tax rate, the 1984-85 budget includes the administration's total recommended budget for both the Farmington Community Library and the 47th District Court.

Last week, Mayor Charles Williams who proposed his own "alternative budget" took full notice of both the library and court budgets. His budget was revised to lower the district court levy.

While the 3 mill levy is less than originally proposed, the new rate still represents an increase over the 1983-84 levy of 7.6 mills.

That means if you own a \$90,000 home assessed at \$16,000, your city

taxes (this does not include the millage you pay for the school district, community college or county) will run approximately \$340.

Under the original budget proposal of 8.2 mills, you would have paid \$369 for the same \$90,000 home.

Although the 8 mill budget is approximately \$200,000 less than the administration's proposed budget, City Manager Lawrence Savage said the change in dollars is insignificant in a \$15 million budget.

"What's primarily changed is the form of things," Savage said.

The 8 mills will be distributed into 7.7 mills for operations (including the city's debt requirement) and .3 mill for

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