

Marks top spender in Hills council race

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Election expense reports show it wasn't the amount of contributions that necessarily led to candidates' victories in the Farmington Hills City Council election Nov. 5.

Jan Dolan, who placed first for a four-year term, received the least in campaign contributions of the five candidates who vied for four council seats. Councilman Ben Marks, who took third place for a four-year term, received and spent the most during his re-election campaign.

Dolan received \$690 in total campaign contributions and spent a total of \$1,018, leaving a final balance of \$328.

But she also entered the election with a balance (from a previous election report) of \$1,035, according to election finance reports filed with the Oakland County elections clerk.

Marks received a total \$6,305 in campaign contributions and spent a total of \$3,611, leaving a balance of \$2,693.

Council victors Jody Soronen and Terry Sever and challenger Jonathan Grant, who lost both the election and a later recount, also filed campaign finance statements.

CANDIDATES ARE required by state law to file pre- and post-election financial reports with the elections clerk if they collect or spend more than

\$500. Failure to file reports results in a \$10 a day fine up to a maximum \$300. Candidates were required to file a pre-election report by Oct. 25 and a post-election report by Dec. 5. The reports show a complete listing of campaign contributions and expenses.

A change was made in Michigan's Campaign Finance Act recently that increases the amount candidates can spend — from \$500 to \$1,000 — without having to file an itemized expense statement. Although the change was made in October, Oakland County elections officials were not notified until after Nov. 5.

Newly elected Farmington City councilmen Alton Bennett, Richard

Topper and Arnold Campbell, and unsuccessful challengers Elizabeth Mitchell, Roger Walker and Gerald Lynch did not receive or spend more than \$500.

Farmington Hills candidates Marks, Sever and Grant filed post-election reports after the Dec. 5 deadline. Marks was fined \$140. Grant and Sever were fined \$40 each.

THE THREE candidates also paid fines for missing deadlines prior to the post-election filing period. Marks was fined \$40 for failing to file the pre-election report by the Oct. 25 deadline. Grant was fined \$30 for failing to file a statement of campaign committee or-

ganization by an Aug. 12 deadline. And Sever, who failed to file the pre-election report until Nov. 5, was fined \$140. In the first filing period that ran to Oct. 25 — the pre-election reporting deadline — Dolan's \$345 in contributions plus the previous balance of \$1,035 totaled \$1,380. By mid-October, she had spent \$394.

In the second filing period that ran to a Nov. 25 cutoff date and a Dec. 5 filing deadline for post-election reports, Dolan carried over a \$985 balance (from the pre-election report) and received \$345 in additional contributions. In this period, she spent \$623.

For the entire election, Dolan spent a total \$1,018 on postage, printing of campaign literature, voting labels, stuffing envelopes, a campaign photograph, brochure art work, a list of registered voters from the city of Farmington Hills and one-quarter of the cost of a mailing (including envelopes and postage) to senior citizens. Dolan shared the cost of the senior citizen mailing with candidates Marks, Soronen and Grant.

Contributors to Dolan's campaign were predominantly private citizens and a contribution from the Woodcreek Civic Association. The largest contribution Dolan received was \$200 from a private citizen.

IN THE first filing period, Marks received \$2,625 in contributions and paid \$1,312 in campaign expenses, as of mid-October. In the second filing period, carried over a \$1,312 balance and received an additional \$3,585 in contributions. In this filing period, he spent \$2,298, leaving a balance of \$2,693.

During his entire campaign, Marks received a total \$6,305 in contributions and spent \$3,611 for advertising, postage, printing of brochures, auto expenses, supplies and materials, legal fees, late filing fees, and an election party.

Contributors to Marks' campaign were private citizens and developers and builders, as well as contributions from the Woodcreek Civic Association and the Woodhaven Nursing Association. Marks received four separate contributions from area developers of \$500.

Grant, whose loss to fourth-place finisher Sever was later confirmed in a recount, received the second greatest

in campaign contributions with a total \$2,595. In the first filing period, Grant received a total \$1,170 from 20 private citizens and spent \$349 of the preliminary total by mid-October primarily on printing and a campaign party.

IN THE second filing period, Grant carried over a \$820 balance. He received an additional \$425 in contributions from private citizens, plus a \$1,000 loan totaling \$1,425 in receipts for the second filing period. But Grant also received \$435 in in-kind services such as printing, artwork, mailing labels, postage, pictures and a mailing list. During the period, he spent \$2,002.

For his entire campaign, Grant received a total \$2,595 in contributions and spent \$2,351 for printing, advertising, bumper stickers, artwork, mailing, charge for stuffing and sorting literature for mailing and charge for the election recount.

Grant's contributors were private citizens and he received only one contribution of \$100 with the rest less than that.

Sever received a total \$1,465 in campaign contributions during his campaign (including \$853 Sever loaned to his election committee), and spent \$1,465, leaving a zero balance. Sever's election expenses included postage, printing and copying, supplies and materials, legal fees and late filing fees.

None of Sever's individual contributors gave more than \$50 each. All of his contributors were private citizens, including candidates Soronen and Grant. Soronen, who placed second in the city council election for a four-year term, did not file a pre-election report because she did not receive or spend more than \$500.

BUT in her post-election statement, Soronen reported receiving \$1,120 in contributions, plus a \$50 in-kind contribution of wine. Soronen spent a total \$941, leaving a balance of \$178. Her campaign expenses included printing campaign literature and invitations, postage, envelopes, stuffing envelopes, room rental for a fund raiser and food and refreshments.

Soronen's contributors were private citizens and only one contribution topped the \$200 mark. The remainder of the contributions were less than \$200.

Tax-escrow controversy resolved

By Marie Chestney
staff writer

Attorney General Frank Kelley and two mortgage companies have struck an agreement ending a snafu which plagued city treasurers at property tax collection time in December 1984.

The agreement ended a quest begun in February by Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara and City Treasurer Elaine Tuttle. The two asked the attorney general to investigate the late escrow reporting practices of the two companies. Dallas-based Lomas and Nettleton and Farmington Hills based Capital Mortgage Co. reached an agreement Dec. 12 which puts on the back burner a lawsuit threatened in April by Kelley against the two companies.

At that time, Kelley charged the firms with an "act of deception" under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act.

Kelley charged the companies misled homeowners into thinking their 1984 property taxes had been paid from escrow accounts in 1984 when in fact they were not paid until late January 1985. The 1985 payment of the taxes meant homeowners could not deduct the taxes on their 1984 federal income tax return.

"SO FAR, so good, but the real proof comes to homeowners this month (December 1985)," said Daniel Loepp, spokesman for the attorney general's office.

Loepp was referring to one part of the agreement whereby the firms promised to do everything possible to get mortgage payments into city treasurers' offices by Dec. 31.

"They agreed to be more steadfast in making sure bills are paid on time and

everything works correctly," Loepp said.

Six hundred of the approximately 3,500 homeowners cited by Kelley as being misled live in Livonia. The rest live mostly in West Bloomfield, Grand Rapids, Warren, Sterling Heights and Lansing.

Tuttle said the city already had received 1985 escrow payments from Lomas and Nettleton. She said she "wasn't sure" if Capital Mortgage had made their payments yet.

THE TWO companies also agreed to pay, at 8 percent interest, any monies lost by a homeowner if he or she claimed the mortgage deduction and subsequently was audited by the IRS.

To show they are "dealing in good faith" with Michigan homeowners, Loepp said both companies also agreed to donate money to the state's Children's Trust Fund. Lomas and Nettleton donated \$7,500; Capital \$3,000.

Loepp said the real solution to solving late escrow payment practices is passage of a bill just reported out of the House Taxation Committee.

The bill, sponsored by state Rep. Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, would set the deadline for property tax payments made by mortgage companies at Dec. 31, instead of the following Feb. 14. Loepp called the chances of the pas-

sage of the bill good.

KELLEY singled out the two companies for a possible lawsuit because of statements they mailed homeowners saying taxes had been paid in 1984. Loepp said Kelley could take them back to court if they failed to live up to the agreement.

"But there's no lawsuit now," he said. "We're not in the business of filing lawsuits but in getting relief for mortgage owners. We want to settle without going to court."

Kelley had threatened to sue the two companies if necessary to repay the money homeowners lost in tax deductions because the companies failed to pay the tax bills on time.

McNamara and Tuttle originally asked the attorney general's office to investigate the late payments because the problem had been mushrooming in recent years, especially by out-of-state, privately held mortgage companies.

MICHIGAN LAW requires mortgage companies to furnish mortgagors with an itemized statement by March 1 of all payments from the escrow fund during the previous calendar year.

Most homeowners prepare their federal income tax return and claim deductions in accordance with these statements.

Focus: free job training

Workers who are unemployed or underemployed as a result of a layoff or business closing may obtain new job skills through the Michigan Job Opportunity Bank (MJOB), a free training program at Oakland Community College.

This competitive training scholarship program is designed to use state community college resources to provide skill assessment, job training and placement services for some 20,000 dislocated Michigan workers.

"Building skills in an area of demand will help displaced workers to re-establish themselves in occupations with a future," said Karen Pagenette, OCC Job Training Partnership Act Program

Director.

"Through the Michigan Job Opportunity Bank, job training can be tailored to the specifications of any Michigan employer — and provided at no cost to the employer to meet manpower needs."

To qualify for free training, program participants must be Michigan residents, and must have been employed for at least three years in the same industry or occupation before displacement.

MJOB training is targeted for completion by July 30. For more information about the program or specific eligibility details, call the Oakland Community College Job Training Office at 540-1544.

Greenery donated

Douglas Kay and Nathan Levine of West Bloomfield Township donated 500 assorted pine, deciduous trees and shrubs, worth \$16,000, to the Oakland County Parks & Recreation Commission.

Kay of Kay Building Corp. and Levine of Nathan Levine & Associates, Architects, recently purchased a semicircle nursery at 12th Mile and Orchard Lake roads in Farmington Hills for development of a 23,000-square-foot general office building. Rather than destroy the stock, they donated it.

All of the pines and deciduous trees, as well as some shrubs, were transplanted to Glen Oaks County Park, Farmington Hills. Remaining shrubs will be used at White Lake Oaks Golf Course in White Lake Township, the County Courthouse in Pontiac and other Oakland County parks.

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