

Battle continues

Aim — prohibiting smoking in public places

By Casey Hane
staff writer

While debate rages on the issue of smoking in public places, one Farmington Hills company is taking action to clean up air in the workplace.

Major Senate bills prohibiting smoking in public places and stopping free distribution of tobacco products were left without vote in committee Tuesday, according to the bills' sponsor, state Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills.

Bills tightening smoking laws for restaurants and placing warnings on smokeless tobacco came out of committee and will now move to the full Senate for consideration.

Meanwhile, at the Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America in Farmington Hills, a program gradually restricting smoking to certain areas is being introduced over the next few months, according to Senior Vice President Vernon Lunn.

"I think you'll see more of it in years to come," Lunn said. Many insurance companies are banning smoking in their buildings completely, he added.

BEGINNING This month at Alexander Hamilton, smoking will be banned in conference rooms and classrooms. In May, a second phase banning smoking in common work areas will be introduced, Lunn said. In addition, the company's eating areas will be divided and certain restrooms designated for smoking.

An incentive program started last year is designed to help employees kick the habit, Lunn continued. The company pays a portion of each employee's "stop smoking" class tuition, and will pay it entirely, through employee reimbursement, if the employee stops smoking for six months.

Apparently, all businesses do not support the smoking restrictions. A representative of 8,000-plus businesses throughout the state, the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce, has voiced disapproval of the pending smoking-related legislation.

If legislation is approved, Faxon would win a 20-year battle of failed smoking-related proposals as state senator. In addition, Michigan would join 10 other states — Minnesota, Utah, Nebraska,

Connecticut, Alaska, Maine, New Jersey, Florida, Hawaii and California — in regulating smoking in the workplace. Hawaii and California's laws apply to state employees only.

Municipalities, including the city of East Lansing, have passed ordinances restricting smoking in private as well as public workplaces.

THE INTENT of one bill — the Michigan Clean Indoor Air Act — is to designate "smoking areas" instead of "non-smoking areas" as we currently know them. The bill was revised from the originally introduced legislation, in a version proponents hope will be "acceptable on both sides."

A coalition of 30 health-related organizations, the Michigan Coalition on Smoking and Health, issued a statement in favor of the revised bill. The American Lung Association of Michigan has also come forward in support.

The tobacco industry and those opposing Faxon's bills have "retained the three major lobbying firms in Lansing" to work against their passage. "Their whole objective is to keep it (the bill) in committee," Faxon added.

The bill states that a proprietor, or other person in charge of a public place, shall locate non-smokers closest to the source of fresh air and that special consideration be given to individuals with a hypersensitivity to tobacco smoke.

The bill would also require a proprietor in charge of a public place to provide "as nearly as practicable" a smoke-free area, Faxon said.

A GRADUAL phase-in process for restricting smoking in the office workplace, would be legislated as follows, according to Faxon:

- Jan. 1, 1987, effective for all state or local governmental agencies considered public places.
- Jan. 1, 1988, effective for all non-governmental places or entities coming under the definition of public place, which have received federal or state money or other financial assistance.
- Jan. 1, 1989, effective for all other non-governmental public places other than those described above.

Opinions sought

Public's help eyed in hiring of school chief

Farmington-area residents and community leaders will have a chance next week to participate in the selection of a new Farmington Public Schools superintendent.

During a two-day visit Feb. 10-11, Richard Featherstone and an associate from the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) will visit 25 locations throughout the district to hear the opinions of those attending the 45-minute public meetings.

In addition to the meetings, local residents are invited to send written suggestions to the following addresses:

- Dr. Richard L. Featherstone, Michigan Association of School Boards, 421 W. Kalamazoo, Lansing, Mich. 48933, or
- Susan C. Rennels, President, Farmington Board of Education, 23122 Tuck Drive, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48024.

THE FARMINGTON Board of Education hired MASB as a consultant to aid in the search for a new school chief. Lewis Schulman retired from the superintendent's post Dec. 31. The position is expected to be filled by July 1.

Following is a schedule of next week's meetings:

- Monday, Feb. 10, 9 a.m., North Farmington High and Dunckel Middle School.
- Monday, Feb. 10, 10 a.m., Wooddale Elementary and Forest Elementary.
- Monday, Feb. 10, 11 a.m., Kenbrook Elementary and Alame-

da Preschool/Special Education Center.

- Monday, Feb. 10, 1 p.m., Harrison High and Warner Middle School.

Monday, Feb. 10, 2 p.m., Wood Creek Elementary and Fairview Prechool Center.

- Monday, Feb. 10, 3 p.m., Ten Mile Community Education Center and East Middle School.

Monday, Feb. 10, 4 p.m., Lewis Schulman Administrative Center — Central Office — meeting for bargaining unit leaders.

- Monday, Feb. 10, 7:30-9 p.m., Lewis Schulman Administrative Center — Central Office — evening meeting for community and staff participation.

Tuesday, Feb. 11, 9 a.m., Beechview Elementary and Eagle Elementary.

- Tuesday, Feb. 11, 10 a.m., Farmington High and Grace Elementary.

Tuesday, Feb. 11, 11 a.m., Flanders Elementary and Longacre Elementary.

- Tuesday, Feb. 11, 1 p.m., Gill Elementary and Power Middle School.

Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2 p.m., Larkshire Elementary and Shawsee Center.

- Tuesday, Feb. 11, 3 p.m., Cloverdale Center and Farmington Training Center.

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