

Negative publicity concerns salon owners

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"It seems the decisions have been made because of the massage parlors (raided by police)," Fucini said. "No city council members have come in to see the difference (in what a professional body massage is). Once they experience the therapeutic massage, they would see there is a definite need."

Faced with objections from the licensed and certified beauty institutes and skin care salons, the Farmington Hills City Council postponed action on the proposed massage ordinance until Feb. 17.

CITY OFFICIALS are considering including under the ordinance's list of exempted professions and businesses those massage therapists certified by one or both of the state's massage associations — the Michigan Chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association and Michigan State Association of Massageologists.

Under the proposed ordinance's current form, trained and certified members of these associations would not be exempt and would be forced to comply with the city's regulations.

Both state associations accept members only on recommendation of current members. Applicants must show

proof of their massage training and education and must pass certification tests before becoming members.

Salon owners say they are in favor of the ordinance as long as their businesses can be exempted under the ordinance's provisions.

"Massage therapists in our salon are certified with those associations," Reed said. "I wouldn't have anyone in my salon giving a massage without that certification."

ALTHOUGH REYES is trained and certified by the school she attended in Pontiac, she is not a member of either state massage association. But Fucini said that if it is necessary to pass the certification process for either association, it wouldn't be a problem.

In fact, Fucini believes massage therapists should be licensed — a certificate showing the therapist has been trained and educated and is a professional.

Wagner agrees. If the business is reputable and the massages are professional and given by a trained person, no one "should have qualms" about obtaining a license, whether from the city or other organization, she said.

The two massage therapists at Klitty Wagner's are licensed by the state's Board of Cosmetology and one is a

member of one of the state's massage associations, Wagner said.

Tamara Friedman, owner of Tamara's Institute de Beaute in Farmington Hills, told council members in January that her employees who provide professional body massages are licensed through the city of Detroit.

UNDER THE city's proposed ordinance, those who provide massages would be required to meet a variety of criteria, including hygiene, to the physical amenities of a room where a massage is performed to a prohibition from opposite sex massages.

Yet the beauty institutes and skin care salons already follow criteria listed in the ordinance. Rules of cleanliness and hygiene are strictly followed by professional massage therapists. For example, towels are not shared, and showers are provided, Reed and Fucini said.

In addition, both Antonio's and Bloomies require clients to fill out medical history questionnaires. The purpose is to know as much as possible about a client's health because some people should not be receiving massages, Reyes said. People with certain health problems should receive massages only if instructed to by a physician.

And any time Reyes has a problem

While the proposed ordinance prohibits giving massages to minors, none of the beauty institutes and skin care salons caters to young people, especially younger than 18. "Eighteen years is the limit. We'll only do it on younger (people) with a doctor's permission," Reyes said.

It is the proposed ordinance's prohibition of opposite sex massages that greatly concerns Reed, Fucini and Reyes. Wagner, however, agrees with the prohibition. Bloomies, Klitty Wagner's and Antonio's have only women massage therapists.

BUT REED and Fucini maintain that the opposite sex prohibition would cause a problem in their business because they have male clients.

"Because we have a sophisticated clientele, we have a lot of men. Men are into their bodies," Fucini said. Two of Reyes' clients, for example, are play for the Detroit Lions.

"What they are attempting to prevent is a woman fooling around with a man. But that is not a legitimate massage," Fucini said. "The whole controversy wouldn't have come up if they (massage parlors) weren't under scrutiny by police."

Reyes said. "The whole controversy wouldn't have come up if they (massage parlors) weren't under scrutiny by police."

with a man who expects something other than a professional therapeutic body massage, Antonio Barone says he has no problem kicking them out.

Reed is also opposed to the opposite sex prohibition because of the possible effect on business.

WAGNER TAKES a different approach to the opposite sex restriction. "I have always felt women should massage women, and men should massage men," Wagner said.

Also of concern to Reed, Fucini and Reyes is the ordinance's prohibition on providing a massage in a private room. They consider privacy to be an important factor in providing a professional massage.

"You need privacy to relax," Reyes said. "You don't need other interruptions (that would occur if a massage was given in a more open area)." To further create a relaxing atmosphere, Reyes will not speak during the hour-long massage. But mellow music is played to allow the client to relax, she said.

Reed considers a private room "essential. I would never want a body massage in front of somebody else. If (massages) are a very modern type of thing," she said.

If the ordinance is adopted prohibiting a private room, Reed said "it would be an incredible hardship. I would not do it in the open. I just wouldn't offer massages."

THE USE of a private room, as well as the concern for hygiene and care in how towels and sheets are draped on a client, are all important factors in a professional massage, Reed and Fucini said.

For example, without exception, a professional massage therapist absolutely will not touch sexual areas of the body, Fucini said. "A professional doesn't touch areas (of the body) where people will flinch," she said.

A professional also will take great care in how the sheets or towels are draped on the body, allowing for mobility without being forced to lose modesty, she said.

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