

Council vetoes paving for Goldsmith

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Goldsmith Road will remain an unpaved "oasis," although only a slight majority of residents want it that way.

An apparent last-minute opinion change by several property owners near the unpaved Farmington Hills road took the percentage of those favoring paving from 52.3 to below the needed 50 percent, City Engineer David Call told the city council Monday.

Two letters from residents were submitted late Monday "saying they want to withdraw their names" from the paving petition, Call said. This represented 2.04 units and changed those approving the proposed paving to 47.8 percent.

A motion to not pave passed by a slim 4-3 margin, with council members Joan Dudley, Terry Sever and

Mayor Joe Alkateeb opposing the measure.

Council members JoAnn Soronen, who made the motion, Jangelle Dolan, Ben Marks and Don Wolf approved the measure, saying they could not support paving of the road without a majority consent of local property owners.

THE COUNCIL has traditionally supported the concept of paved roads throughout the city and reiterated their stand at a June meeting.

"There does not seem to be adequate signatures — we do not have enough to proceed," Soronen said. "I move that we don't adopt the resolution."

Dolan said the council had heard enough on the matter, and suggested if the paving proponents came back with the needed signatures, she would approve the paving.

Several residents and property owners from both viewpoints spoke

before the council, all voicing concern with the drainage problem regardless of the road status.

Goldsmith Road is "an oasis in this city," three-lot property owner and anti-paving spokesman Robert Graves said. "No one feels the road is perfect . . . I don't think anyone would like to see the road exactly like it is, as far as drainage. But a blacktopped road would ruin that." Others in his group said paving would increase driving speeds and would lose the "country atmosphere" on the street.

PAVING PROPOSITOR Al Heike said the road has problems "every season" and added that leaving the road unpaved and repairing the drainage problem would only be a temporary fix.

"The drainage ditches would be covered within a few years — they would erode."

"Some of us just don't want to pay

for it," he added. "I don't see how we can do this (help the drainage problem) without paying something for it."

The total estimated for the paving project is \$185,741, including engineering, construction and special assessment district costs, Call said in his report. The city would pay 5 percent, or \$21,416, while the bulk of the project, or \$164,325 would be assessed to property owners.

City estimates show the average homeowner in the assessment district would pay \$3,629 for the paving. City administrators recommended this option, based on the 52.3 percent property owner approval when the paving was prepared.

BESIDES DISCUSSING the paving issue, some residents criticized the city's maintenance of the road and the way it's graded.

"It's apparent the city doesn't want to take care of it," said one res-

ident. Another said the city is "using the wrong materials" when grading the road.

Longtime resident Tom Van Cleave said the road problems started when construction traffic began about one year ago.

"The road was getting consistently better," he said, "but with increased usage and abuse by construction traffic, it's been in bad shape this past year."

Before voting, Alkateeb stressed that paving is "the right thing to do. I see no other solution."

ABOUT THE "extensive costs" cited by the anti-paving group, Dudley commented that both paving and maintaining gravel roads were costly.

"The difference is who they cost — maintenance is much more expensive on a gravel road," she said, noting that all taxpayers pay for it. "I've never had anybody come

back and say, 'I want the dust,' and 'I want the problems,'" she added. "I think the petitioners (pro-paving) came to this meeting knowing full well they had the signatures. This (the 50 percent requirement) is council policy, not a charter policy."

The debate, which evolved into some bickering between neighbors Monday, began last February, when city officials met with residents to discuss paving. In June, petitions were received by groups favoring paving and those favoring regreasing, with slightly more in favor of leaving the road unpaved.

Because the council favors the paving of city roads, they gave paving proponents another chance to obtain the needed signatures, prompting Monday's public hearing.

The matter is now a moot issue unless a majority petition approving paving is presented to the council at a future date.

Preschool education is a key to the future

This is the final installment in a series examining four task force reports recently presented to the Farmington Board of Education. This part looks at the future of the district's early education programs, and what is in store for that group commonly known as preschoolers.

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Very young Farmington students — from birth through early elementary years — deserve special ranking in the district and an individual identity as a group, according to members of a task force committee studying early childhood education.

Trustees will take a special look at the district's youngest students and their special needs as the Farmington school board reviews this task force report, and others involving staff development, building renovations, and human resources.

The committee's goal was to "determine precisely where the district's future lies," which they did by identifying trends and making three specific recommendations they felt would enhance early childhood education in the district.

Committee members suggested the district "recognize a unique early childhood component" — as it has at elementary, middle school and high school levels — and that it include children up to the age of seven and all kindergartners.

They also suggested a voluntary, extended kindergarten day be included, and made a suggestion that the district "be ready with appropriate setting and curriculum when education for 4-year-olds is written into law."

SECONDLY, THEY requested special staff development and training in the early childhood area be implemented. The district is currently organizing a staff development and curriculum department, which would help in this and other areas of the district.

The committee also suggested a day care center benefit be offered to school employees, utilizing the facilities already available in the early education program currently underway in the district in two buildings. The group felt this would be advantageous as a teacher recruitment technique, according to the report.

The committee was comprised of Gayle Zimmerman and Jeannette Sow-

man, two early childhood teachers, district residents Betsy Gantra and Sue Donio and the district's two special education supervisors, Richard Ruitter from Fairview and Mary Lou Somerville from Alameda, who made the recommendations for the district's youngest students.

Somerville chaired the committee. The trends, which were reviewed before reporting on the future of early childhood education, include family, school and curriculum issues throughout the district.

In area families, the committee discovered 60 percent of school-age children have working mothers, that there are a number of single parent families, that the preschool population is increasing and that there is also a noticeable increase in the handicapped infant population due to medical advances.

The report sees a growing call for teacher certification, specifically in early childhood education and the future possibility of mandated education for 4-year-olds due to pending state legislation.

The Farmington district must be aware of the earlier identification of high risk children and those with special needs, according to the report.

THE EARLY childhood committee studied six specific programs in the area before making their recommendations, including: the High Scope Foundation Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, the Sacred Heart Academy in Bloomfield Hills,

the Wee Care Center in Birmingham, the Ealy School in West Bloomfield the Children's Learning Center at Pontiac's St. Joseph Hospital and the Scaten Nursery at the Sarah Fisher Home in Farmington Hills.

All dealt with various aspects of

teaching 3-5 year olds based on different education methods.

Committee members also used varied reading materials and their backgrounds to bring the recommendations together.

Residents will be notified

It's a small step for Farmington Hills mobile home residents, but local activist Maisha Silver believes it's a positive step for everyone involved.

The Farmington Hills City Council passed a resolution Monday, July 14, to advise any residents — either renters or owners in a mobile home — of proposals and public hearings to discuss rezoning the land beneath their houses.

"Under current law and policy, only the owners of property and adjacent properties are given official notification that a rezoning or a particular piece of property is being considered," City Manager William Costick said in his report to council.

ALL OWNER/OCCUPANTS of single-family dwellings in the city

are currently notified by law, according to City Attorney Paul Bibeau.

"This will give a lot of positive feelings to people who live in parks," said Silver, a member of the Mobile Home Tenants' Coalition who was present at the meeting. "Now, we won't have to rely on someone finding out (about a proposed rezoning) by accident."

The change was requested by Silver following a heated March council meeting where Oakland Hills Mobile Home Park residents became upset at news that a proposal was in the works to rezone their land for apartments or cluster homes. The council denied the rezoning request in April, following more discussion and picketing outside of city hall.

According to the resolution, notification will be done by first class mail at least 14 days prior to the date scheduled for public hearing on the proposed rezoning. Letters will be addressed "To Occupant," since the city carries only the names of the people who pay taxes on real property — not the occupants of a house.

If address information is not available, the information will be hand-delivered by a city employee to each mobile home contained in the proposed rezoning area, the policy said.

Costick said officials "felt an ordinance change was not necessary," and proposed the resolution for the new city policy. Its effective date is July 14.



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