

Zoning variance by Hills draws fire

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must be responsive to our citizens, many of whom are incapable of being here to represent their interests — the young, old, sick . . .

State law — as upheld by the Michigan Supreme Court last November — does not restrict placement of group homes, including adult foster care homes, in residential neighborhoods. Local government officials do have the authority to recommend denial of a license when facilities are within 1,500 feet of each other. The licenses are granted by the Michigan Department of Social Services.

Although council members had the

option of recommending denial of Murchie's license request because of the 1,500-foot guideline, they instead granted a variance with certain restrictions.

Restrictions imposed by the council include limiting the variance for the period of time that Murchie's two residents — a 59-year-old woman with Alzheimer's disease and a 77-year-old man — live in the East Lyman residence. Council also restricted Murchie from taking in other residents.

Under state law, an adult foster care home is a private residence with the capacity to house no more than six adults who will be provided

foster care for five or more days a week for two or more consecutive weeks.

Murchie is required to obtain a license to operate an adult foster care home because the residents are related to her and the 59-year-old woman is currently receiving care, city officials said.

Responding to residents' claims that Murchie and her husband have their house for sale, the couple told council that they would take their house off the market if they were granted a variance. The Murchies told council they put their house up for sale because they felt "personally attacked" because of neighbors' comments made at an earlier meeting in July.

The residents were living with the Murchies before they moved to Farmington Hills, city officials said.

NEIGHBORS ALSO charged that the Murchies are advertising to take more residents into their home. But council's restrictions on the variance will prevent the Murchies from housing any more than the current

two residents.

Angry neighbors reiterated opinions Monday that they voiced at the July meeting.

Neighbors expressed concern about a potential drop in property values in the subdivision as well as concern about having two group homes in the neighborhood — the Murchies' and another one for mentally retarded adults at 26135 Drake, southwest of the Murchies' house.

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of sad situations in the world . . . said a resident, adding that Old Homestead subdivision shouldn't be expected to solve the world's problems.

Still others said once the Murchies are licensed by social services, the potential will be there to expand and include people with various disabilities. Neighbors also called the Murchies' care of the residents a business because they receive state payments for care to the resident with Alzheimer's disease.

Neighbors also said the variance and license should be withheld because the Murchie home is one of the few, if not the only house, not yet hooked up to the sewer system.

Harger House future unclear

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A \$26,000 cash offer for the Greek Revival-period house was rejected by the Hunt Club subdivision association last spring. The Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington also showed an interest recently in the old house, which city officials have agreed to preserve. Local residents are favored removing or demolishing.

Despite the interest, opinions of various community factions calling for either restoration or demolition have not changed during the past year. Costick said it's time to get the groups together and make a decision about what to do with the Greek Revival structure. It was built in 1837.

"Not much has happened," he said. "I think we need to deal with it — to get the representatives together," he said.

Costick called for an August or early September meeting of the parties involved.

Ted Hengesbaugh, member of the Hunt Club Association Board of Directors and chairman of the group's steering and finance committee, said the cash offer made by an individual was turned down by the board in May.

The Universalist Unitarian Church across Halsted Road — which was interested in the historic house as a parsonage — declined to make an offer, he said, according to information presented at an Aug. 7 board of directors meeting.

board members include two representatives from local property owners and three members from Standard Federal. Hengesbaugh said.

Resident opinion polls taken during the past year show most want the house torn down, said Hengesbaugh and Allen.

Standard Federal has remained neutral on the issue, while the Hills City Council and Historical Commission favor saving the house. Several local groups have also shown an interest in utilizing the facility if it were restored.

A POLL of residents tallied Aug. 6, had 46 of 60 respondents favoring a possible sale to the Universalist Unitarian Church; 30 favored removal and relocation of the house. If that was not possible, they favored tearing the house down.

"We'd love to see it moved, but nobody wants to see it here," Hengesbaugh said. "We don't want to wait — we want Standard Federal to pay for it (the demolition)."

He voiced concern that if the open space is completed around the house that the association will have to pay to have the house removed. Since obtaining the land by default, Standard Federal has resold the subdivision parcels to a developer on a land contract, Allen said. The bank is responsible for completing the 20-acre open space, and has tentative plans filed with the city to do general grading work, balancing of retention ponds and planting to bring the open space to city specifications, he added.

Standard Federal has agreed to give it their best efforts to get it done this fall," Hengesbaugh added.

"IT'S TIME to complete the open space," Costick agreed.

Farmington Hills Historical Commission members made their view known about the Harger House known last Friday, when they placed a local historic marker on the city right-of-way in front of the former dairy farm.

The commission has the right to mark what are historic locations throughout the city, Costick said.

This is not the same as declaring the site as part of the city's historic district, something which is controlled by the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission. The commission makes recommendations to the city council. The council must then pass an ordinance making it part of the historic district. This has not been done, Costick added.

Hengesbaugh said the sign placement as a "subtle pressure" on local residents, who might think the site had already been declared part of a historic district.

"I think it's pretty high-handed — they did it without input as to our opinions," he said. According to a city report of a meeting between city officials, Standard Federal officials opposed placing the Harger House in the historic district at an earlier meeting. "The bank was not in favor of making this kind of move, expressing the view that this would perhaps bind the parties in a manner that they might find detrimental in the future," the report said.

Allen said the bank remained neutral on the position of Harger House and areas, including that of the historic district. "Standard Federal has had no resistance to that," he said. "We've remained neutral on the subject."

Aim — assimilating into American life

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the drama better clarified that they are Persian.

Khoury cites another example. Candidates for national office were asked five questions concerning the Middle East, ordinary questions like naming the leader of Morocco. Khoury said none was able to give correct answers.

ALKATEEB PUTS it another way. "Some Americans tend to tie all Arabs into the same vein. That is not right. The word 'Arab' is even wrong. By definition, it is one who lives in the desert. A Bedouin. Not all Arab-speaking people are Arabs in the true sense of the word," he said.

Eliminating stereotyping of Arab-Americans is one of Khoury's goals. That, and setting the record straight. They are objectives he worked toward long before he was invited by President Jimmy Carter to participate in the Middle East peace talks at Camp David in 1978.

Like Alkateeb, Khoury was 16 years old when he arrived in the United States in 1948 from Ramallah, a small village in what was then Palestine.

While Alkateeb came here to complete high school and earn a university degree in electrical engineering, Khoury was one of an estimated 1 million refugees who fled or were expelled when Palestine became Israel in 1948.

According to Abdeen Jabara of Detroit, recently elected president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the Palestinian exodus is one of several instances in history when a military-occupied country was resettled by outsiders.

primarily from Europe, while the majority of the original population was forced to take refuge elsewhere.

WHILE THERE is always flight of the local population during occupation, rarely is it seen in such high numbers. The village of Ramallah is telling. Today, an estimated 25,000 people originally from Ramallah now live in the United States, five times more than the number that continue to live in the small village.

Palestinians now living in the United States are lucky, Khoury said. Those now living elsewhere, particularly in Arab countries other than Jordan, possess neither citizenship nor passport. Instead, they are issued travel documents, Jabara said.

Nearly a half-million Palestinian refugees settled in temporary camps in Alkateeb's homeland of Lebanon, 16 camps of poverty that over the years contributed to the political instability in that country. At this point, neither man feels he has a homeland to which he can easily return to visit. Politically, Khoury is non-existent. Alkateeb's is under seige. Lebanon is a country locked in a desperate and destructive civil war. The family home where his parents still reside was bombed earlier this month, he said.

Alkateeb said he capitalizes on his Arab background in approaching life's challenges today, keeping in mind how little he began with. This summer, he said he felt like crying when, as mayor, he addressed Farmington-area Little Leaguers.

"Look at what you've got. Your parents. Your uniforms. Your excitement," he told the assembled youngsters. "It's really something."



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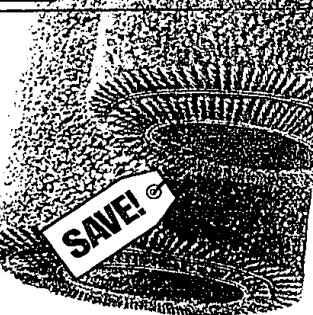
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