

# Planned group home in Hills opposed

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

**D**ESPITE CONTINUED neighborhood objections to a planned group home for mentally ill people on Grayling Street, staff members are being trained, six people have been tentatively selected as residents, and all final city building inspections are approved for the state-sponsored home.

According to information presented at a meeting Dec. 11 at Farmington Hills City Hall, plans are moving ahead for the residential site on Grayling, where six mentally ill or emotionally disturbed residents will live. The Grayling neighborhood is south of Grand River in the city's southeast corner.

State officials tried to allay citizen fears about the group home — the first for mentally ill people in the city — during the 2 1/2-hour session, which involved employees of the state Department of Mental Health, the state Department of Social Services, the city of Farmington Hills and several concerned property owners on Grayling Street, who have followed the issue from the beginning.

Also present were three representatives from Renaissance Home Inc., the Ypsilanti-based non-profit group contracted to operate the facility.

It was the third meeting between state officials and residents regarding the group home since it was proposed earlier this year.

"IT ALL boils down to the state does what the state wants," resident Walt Hayward said. "It's silly to put this type of facility in the heart of a neighborhood."

"We talk about the rights of (group home) residents," Hayward added. "What about the rights of people who live here? You're throwing mentally ill people in our back yard. What about our rights — nobody seems to care about us."

Another resident threatened to sue the state because he feels his property's value will decline.

Before word of the state group home was official, Demetri Jovanovic said, he was relocated to California in his work, but has since lost the job because he could not sell his house. He attributes his problems to the group home location.

"It goes without saying, these residents don't want the home



*'What about the rights of people who live here? You're throwing mentally ill people in our back yard. What about our rights — nobody seems to care about us.'*

— Walt Hayward  
Grayling resident

there," City Manager William Costick said. "It's my opinion . . . the state intends to continue to put the home on Grayling."

STATE EMPLOYEES answered questions regarding medication, treatment, group home residents' backgrounds, how employees are trained, financial pay rates and other financial group home considerations, as well as questions about Renaissance Home.

DSS and DMH representatives said the new neighbors will not be a danger to themselves and others. "Just because they've had treatment doesn't mean they can't get better," James Quigley, director of the DSS Division of Adult Foster Care Licensing, told the residents.

"They are not prisoners of that home — that is indeed the whole premise of adult foster placement," Quigley continued. "It has been very successful. We want them involved in the neighborhood, in the community."

Department of Mental Health official David Callanan explained that state legislation has forced the policy of streamlining mentally ill and emotionally disturbed people from institutions into local communities. The state currently has 143 group homes for such residents throughout the state.

"We're moving toward a more local setting," Callanan told the group, "from more restrictive to

less restrictive settings. They can recover more quickly in a less restrictive setting."

STATE LICENSING officials assured the residents that all complaints against group homes are investigated, and if there is "severe abuse, willful abuse, or financial exploitation, we will take action to remove the license," according to Quigley.

He said the state cited 15 facilities last July for "various and sundry activities" and that so far this year, 65 enforcement actions have been taken at homes throughout the state. "We had a banner year for enforcements," he added.

In group homes such as the one proposed for Grayling Street, DSS caseworkers visit the facility two to four times per week, and residents visit a psychiatrist once a month, or more if needed. The DSS licensing division also visits a minimum of once per year, or more if complaints are filed, officials said.

Other resident concerns involving trespassing and other local ordinance issues were answered by assistant city attorney Martin Testasleca, who explained criminal and civil liabilities, and residents' rights, in general terms.

He added, "They are not running this home in a vacuum. You have the right to go to your local police department, if you have a complaint."



David Callanan (left) of the state Department of Mental Health and James Quigley, Michael Swajenen and Barbara Smalley of the state Department of Social Services — at the Dec. 11 group home meeting in Farmington Hills City Hall.

## Notification of offenses sought

The city of Farmington Hills wants to know when anyone with a criminal record is placed in the Grayling Street group home that will house those with a history of mental illness.

Although state officials said they encourage the city to make a formal request for that information, they said they could not provide the information because it would constitute an invasion of individual privacy.

The discussion came during a meeting Dec. 11 between state and city officials and local residents who had questions about the group home.

"We're going to make that request," City Manager William Costick told state officials.

Costick said he felt it was important for the city to have any information about such residents noted in the city's law enforcement files, in case there is a problem in the future.

He said the information would be kept confidential and would be used only for police background information.

"I WOULD be reluctant to set such a precedent," state Department of Mental Health representative David Callanan said about giving out such background information.

Although assistant city attorney Martin Testasleca agreed the privacy issue should be considered, he told state officials the city was within its rights to request such information. "That's not an unreasonable request of the city council," he said.

Testasleca cited a system used in the city of Detroit, where law enforcement personnel track residents with criminal records for 10 years.

Callanan said if the city makes a request, it would be taken to the state attorney general for an opinion regarding the privacy issue.

The group home facility, to be run by the Ypsilanti-based Renaissance Home Inc. and first of its kind in Farmington Hills, will house up to six mentally ill or emotionally disturbed people. Its operation will be supervised by both the Department of Mental Health and the state Department of Social Services.

FOR THE past several months, it has been the subject of controversy among some local residents who have tried to halt state efforts to place it on Grayling.

Their concerns revolved around allegations against a male employee in a Ypsilanti Renaissance Home group facility who was accused of sexual contact and drug use with a patient. State officials said they could not substantiate the charges.

Phyllis Levine, supervisor for residential development at the Ypsilanti Regional Psychiatric Hospital, said the six people being considered for the initial placement at the Grayling Street group home did not have criminal records.

State officials have said they could not guarantee future residents would not have a history of criminal records, including convictions of criminal sexual conduct.

## Road work Improvement timetable is set

Farmington Hills has unveiled a three-year timetable for major road improvements.

The top funding source will be a \$7-million, general-obligation bond issue approved by Farmington Hills voters last fall.

Other sources will include federal money, state gas and weight tax revenue, city capital improvement dollars, the Oakland County Road Commission and special assessment districts. West Bloomfield will share the cost of widening 14 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads.

"It is incumbent upon this office to do as much of the work as quickly as possible in order to respond to the confidence that the voters of Farmington Hills expressed at the polls," City Manager William Costick said.

He added, "We would anticipate that because of this effort, we would expect the city of Farmington Hills to have more construction on its roads than at any time in the past. Although there will be some inconvenience that is experienced with this, it is necessary in order to provide as quick a response to the residents of the community as possible."

One of the most-anticipated projects is the widening of Orchard Lake Road, between Grand River and 11 Mile. The road will be widened between 10 Mile and Grand River by September 1988 and between 10 and 11 Mile by September 1989, according to the timetable.

THE TIMETABLE also lists these paving or resurfacing projects:

- Farmington Road, between 13 and 14 Mile — to be resurfaced by July 1987.
- Middlebelt, between Northwestern Highway and 14 Mile — to be resurfaced by July 1987.
- 10 Mile, between Orchard Lake Road and Inkster — to be resurfaced by July 1987.
- 13 Mile-Northwestern Highway intersection — 13 Mile to be widened by August 1987.
- Drake, between 13 and 14 Mile — to be paved by August 1987.
- 13 Mile, west of Orchard Lake Road — to be widened by August 1987.
- 12 Mile, between Orchard Lake Road and Inkster — to be resurfaced by August 1987.
- 14 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads — to be widened by September 1987.
- 13 Mile-Inkster — addition of left-turn lanes each way.
- 13 Mile-Oak Point — extension of existing lane on 13 Mile at Oak Point.
- Nine Mile-Halsted — corner reconstruction.
- 13 Mile-Edythe — intersection widening.
- 11 Mile-Kilreigh — intersection widening.
- 13 Mile-Greening — extension of right-turn lane on 13 Mile from Orchard Lake Road to Greening.
- 14 Mile-Heather Heath — addition of passing lane on 14 Mile at Heather Heath.
- Eight Mile-Lujan — addition of passing lane on Eight Mile at Lujan.
- 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road — curb and drainage improvements to southwest corner.

ened by September 1987.

• 13 Mile-Haggerty intersection — both roads to be widened by September 1987.

• Pebble Creek Bridge — to be widened by September 1987.

• Haggerty-Nine Mile intersection — to be widened by September 1987.

• 12 Mile at Denison's Seafood Tavern — right-turn lane on 12 Mile to be extended by September 1987.

• Tuk, between Eight Mile and Folsom — to be paved by September 1987.

• 13 Mile, between Halsted and Haggerty — to be paved by October 1987.

• Halsted, between 12 and 14 Mile — to be paved by November 1987.

• Tuk, between Grand River and Nine Mile — to be paved by July 1988.

• Lytle, between Nine Mile and Drake — to be resurfaced by July 1988.

• 14 Mile, between Farmington Road and Haggerty — to be resurfaced by August 1988.

• Drake, between 11 Mile and I-696 — to be paved by November 1988.

THESE SAFETY programs are slated for completion by August 1987:

• 14 Mile, west of Inkster — curve re-construction.

• 14 Mile-Inkster — corner reconstruction.

Both Farmington and Farmington Hills will participate in a tri-party agreement between the cities, Oakland County and the Oakland County Road Commission.

Storm sewer catch basin and curb repairs plus a road overlay are projects proposed for Farmington, while the Hills is proposing improvement to the Nine Mile and Haggerty intersection including widening and left turn phases on traffic signals.

Hills officials are also proposing the extension of the westbound lane of 12 Mile just west of Orchard Lake Road.

The countywide three-year, \$3 million road program will begin in 1987. The \$1 million per year from the county will be divided equally between townships and cities and villages, according to Farmington

City Manager Robert Deadman.

Local communities and the county road commission must match the county funds to participate.

Farmington's contribution from the county units is \$19,481 per year, totaling \$38,962 over the life of the agreement. In addition, \$10,250 from the 1984 tri-party agreement has not been used and will be added to the city's project.

The Farmington projects recommended by Director of Public Services Earl Billing include: storm sewer basin repairs along Farmington Road from Eight Mile to Grand River and an overlaying of Nine Mile from Grand River east to Hawthorne. Curb and storm sewer systems on Nine Mile will also be repaired.

TRAFFIC SIGNALS are targeted for these intersections:

• Nine Mile-Gill — by March 1987.

• Nine Mile-Drake and Eight Mile-Gill — by October 1987.

• 13 Mile-Drake and 14 Mile-Drake — by May 1988.

Various sidewalk improvements, funded through the city's capital improvement program, are planned by September 1987.

Joint project unveiled

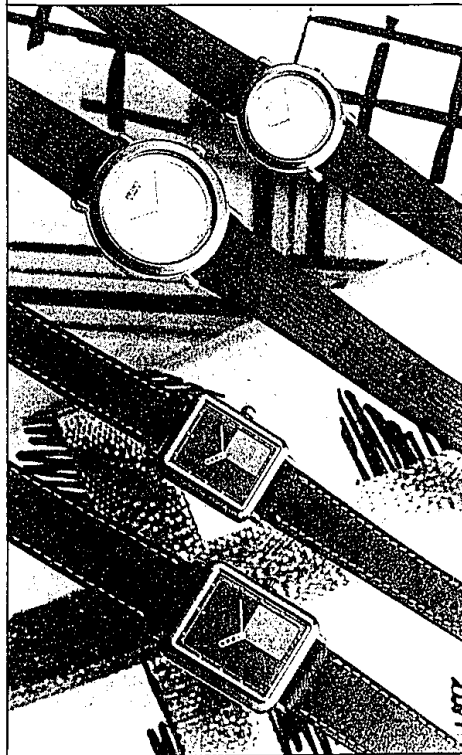
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