

# Neighbors should be notified — council

By Casey Hana  
staff writer

Farmington's fence ordinance is being changed so neighboring property owners, who would be most affected by a height variance, would be notified.

The Farmington City Council voted Sept. 21 to introduce an amendment changing the ordinance. The council also agreed to continue hearing requests for both fence and sign variances to better control them.

Councilman Richard Tupper, who

proposed the ordinance change, had earlier suggested that the council consider transferring the authority for granting variances from the council to the city's zoning board of appeals.

City manager Robert Deadman reported that results of an informal survey showed the city councils in most communities do not handle such variances.

"They are typically given to other boards," Deadman said.

Tupper received no support for his suggestion, and councilman Ralph

Yoder opposed it.

"I frown on transferring authority from this body," he said. "It's always worked well."

BUT THE council gave unanimous approval to amending the fence ordinance to notify adjacent property owners of any variance request.

Councilman Arnold Campbell suggested that only those adjoining the property in question should be notified, not those across the street or in other parts of the neighborhood.

"We owe it to the residents and business community to come in and

voice their opinion on a variance," Tupper said.

He also warned that the council must be consistent when considering variances. "We're walking in dangerous waters if we do not process appeals in a like manner across the board."

The city council did not change the ordinance because of past litigation. According to Deadman, there have been no lawsuits in the past 25 years involving variances of other fences or signs.

TUPPER RAISED the subject of sign and fence variances with fellow council members several months ago, when he suggested variance guidelines be created and suggested transferring the authority for such decisions to the ZBA.

Last week's discussion and amendment introduction was prompted by Tupper's attendance at a seminar on a legal decision that allowed government compensation to a developer when he was not allowed to use his property.

After hearing about the litigation, Tupper said he wanted to be sure the city's policies are "on firm ground."

"It's a matter of being responsible to our citizens," he added.

A SEPT. 4 legal opinion from city attorney Robert Kelly said the council could attach conditions when it grants variances and could "obtain the written agreement of the property owner to such conditions."

Kelly said the variance is granted on the property; change of ownership would have no effect on the variance. Kelly was not present for Monday's discussion.

In July, it was found that earlier city councils requested the responsibility for hearing requests for sign variances, at the request of Farmington residents who wanted it in the hands of an elected body.

ZBA members are not elected, but appointed by the council.

# Dems await primary election

By Jackie Klein  
staff writer

Three Southfield Democrats will bump heads in the Tuesday, Nov. 3 special primary election in their bid for a seat on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Only one Republican filed for the post in District 21, eliminating a GOP primary.

Democrats Lillian Jaffe Oaks, a former city councilwoman, Eric Coleman, Southfield School Board trustee, and Lew Barnett, a repeat challenger, are seeking the vacancy in District 21 created by the Aug. 19 death of Alexander Perinoff.

DOUGLAS SOKOLOWSKI, a Southfield Republican who last year ran against Perinoff, will again seek the office. He will vie for the position in the Dec. 8 special election with the top Democratic vote getter in the Nov. 3 primary.

Jaffe Oaks was president of the Southfield City Council in 1982-83.

and president pro tem in 1979-81. She serves on the Governor's Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

Coleman is secretary of the Southfield School Board. He was elected to the board in June 1986.

Barnett has opposed Perinoff a

number of times in low-key campaigns.

SOKOLOWSKI, in the 1986 county primary, beat out Republican challenger Richard Lytwiniuk of Farmington Hills. He lost to Perinoff in the general election by a vote of

6,045 to 3,004.

District 21 covers a large portion of Southfield and a small part of Farmington Hills. It includes the area from Eight Mile to 10 Mile, west to the city of Farmington boundary and east to Greenfield Road at the Oak Park boundary.

## clarification

A story in the Sept. 24 issue of the Observer should have said that Haroune Alameddine has worked for the Farmington school district for 18 years.

He is beginning his ninth year coordinating the district's bilingual education program. He was recently promoted to administrative assistant for bilingual education.

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1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION: **THE OBSERVER**

2. NUMBER OF ISSUES PUBLISHED: **10-1-87**

3. DATE OF FILING: **10-1-87**

4. OWNER: **THE OBSERVER, INC.**

5. OWNER'S ADDRESS: **31205 Orchard Lake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334**

6. OWNER'S PHONE: **855-0188**

7. OWNER'S FAX: **855-0188**

8. OWNER'S E-MAIL: **THEOBSERVER@AOL.COM**

9. OWNER'S WEBSITE: **WWW.OBSERVERONLINE.COM**

10. OWNER'S SOCIAL MEDIA: **FACEBOOK: THEOBSERVER, TWITTER: THEOBSERVER, YOUTUBE: THEOBSERVER**

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