

# Alkateeb officially rescinds resignation

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington Hills councilman Joe Alkateeb is holding on to his city council seat.

The veteran councilman Monday officially rescinded the verbal resignation he made Aug. 8 as he angrily stalked out of council chambers amid allegations of council "cronyism" and threats of recall by a group of southeast Farmington Hills residents who said they had support throughout the city.

"I got very angry last Monday night . . . not because I was threatened with recall, not because I was unjustly accused, but because I saw a very deep failing in a political system that I deeply respect and admire," Alkateeb said.

"For no good reason, without any basis, with total fabrication of the facts, without any understanding of how this government works, a citizen stood before you and maligned and abused two council members in particular and the city council as a whole and she decided to single out two council members as the most responsible," he continued.



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Farmington Hills residents Marie and Marco Rumignani, 3 and 5 respectively, came to the United States from France with their parents three years ago.

## Marks defuses opponents by retaining council seat

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employees. Attitude and perceptions are set at the leadership level," Flum continued.

Marks Tuesday denied any special treatment and any attempt to cover up his longstanding debt to the city.

"It was always on the books as a receivable. There was no coverage. The biggest thing you have to understand is there was no malice. At no time was there an indication or action of coverage," Marks said.

Marks earlier said the situation occurred when he wrote a check in anticipation of mortgage financing that became unexpectedly delayed because of a mixup about minimum occupancy requirements for his building.

Councilwoman Jan Dolan, who

said she's not ready to join "the lynching," apologized for "the perceived impropriety."

Councilman Terry Sever addressed remarks to the "predicament" city manager William Costick was put in by Marks' financial situation. "I am behind Mr. Costick 100 percent and I am sorry he was put into the predicament he was put into by one of council members."

Marks Tuesday confirmed that Costick made every attempt to urge the veteran councilman to pay the debt. Costick kept the late payment as a receivable instead of putting it on Marks' 1987 tax bill last December, thereby placing a lien on the property.

Alkateeb rescinded his verbal resignation on advice from city attorney Paul Bibeau. His other option was to submit a written resignation.

Councilman Ben Marks, who came under fire last week for a 1½-year-old, \$17,000 business-related debt to the city, also was the target of residents' anger and recall threats. Marks paid the overdue sewer tap-in charges, plus interest and penalties, Aug. 13.

RESIDENTS HAVE apparently backed off recall attempts but are calling for Marks' resignation "for having broken public trust."

In a prepared statement Aug. 8, resident Janet Hubert, who on behalf of other residents threatened recall last week, alleged the council too often sided with developers. She specifically discussed downtown homes and other concerns involving developer Howard Keating, the proposed zoning reclassification of the Flamingo Trailer Court and lot splitting. She also criticized council members for being unresponsive to residents' planning and land-use desires. Hubert did not attend Monday's meeting.

But Stockton resident Rosa Flum, who helped write

the prepared statement read by Hubert Aug. 8, read another prepared statement Monday regarding both Alkateeb's walking out of council chambers the previous week and Marks' financial dealings with the city.

"His (Alkateeb) ideas about upholding the laws are so far from rational thinking that he really would have performed a public service by not returning to this table. We feel he is a much better actor than council person," Flum said.

"You see Mr. Alkateeb, we knew around 6:30 p.m. Monday last that you were going to resign. The stupid remarks you blamed your so-called resignation on were not read before this council until 7:45 p.m. Are these remarks stupid enough for you Mr. Alkateeb?" Flum continued.

ALKATEEB LATER denied that he told anyone he intended to walk out and resign Aug. 8.

Alkateeb seized the opportunity Monday to respond to residents' "unprovoked attack on this council." He responded to three words "mentioned last Monday in the unprovoked attack on this council" — growth, responsive and developers.

"The city council does not go around the state begging developers to build in this city. Developers choose a city and they build in it," Alkateeb said.

Responding to charges of unresponsiveness, Alkateeb said: "If being everything to everybody is responsive, I'm not that kind of person. I promise you to give you the truth and nothing else. If this is not good enough, then find yourself some other council members who you can term responsive."

Alkateeb told residents that developers "is not a dirty word" and they "are not the enemies of the state." For the most part, developers have built in accordance with the city's master land-use plan, he said.

"If the master plan is not to your liking, let us work together to amend it. Let us not deny the rights accorded our citizens just because they call themselves developers," Alkateeb continued.

Only one council member, Aldo Vagnozzi, responded to Alkateeb's statement: "I didn't feel abused by what happened last week." Vagnozzi said residents have the right to speak to the council about grievances "real or imagined. I think that's what happened."

## Heritage and Heritage: a U.S. duo

One forefather came as an impressed Hessian to fight for George III against the colonists. Freed after the Revolution, he settled in Pennsylvania; his many-great-granddaughter lives in Farmington Hills.

Another, Scotch-Irish, fought with Washington for freedom during the "insurrection" that spawned the Constitution.

Two fled Ireland and four sought better chances for life than Scotland offered.

The "Blessings of Liberty" Picnic Sunday focused for Farmington-area residents on the meaning and heritage of America. Appropriately, it was held in Heritage Park, Farmington Hills.

They spoke of Lebanon, Italy, the Ukraine.

"The Poles have not these freedoms," said Les Urban. A native of Taiwan, George Tseng, recounted his unbelievable chance to come to U.S. shores — and why he replaced his own difficult-to-pronounce first name with that of George — "our great American patriot and leader."

Another, Scotch-Irish, fought somewhat the 90-degree heat of the late afternoon as the crowd enjoyed the beauties of the park and the spirit of the occasion," said Jean Fox, event chairman.

A PROGRAM of American music was offered by the Franklin Village Band, under the leadership of Conrad Lam; music of Stephen Foster, Irving Berlin and George M. Cohan was played. A "Political Parade" had partisans singing for Bush or Dukakis.

"Heritage Park never looked love-



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

At the picnic, Chris Stiehl of Farmington Hills tells about his family roots in Ireland.

lier, in this, the first major civic event to be held on the grounds," Fox said. The afternoon was sponsored by the Farmington Area Committee on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution.

"We love our freedoms . . . but we shall lose those freedoms we all so

highly regard if we don't maintain our democracy. If we don't vote they won't mean anything," said John B. Swanson, chairman of the Michigan Historical Commission and former governor of Michigan.

"We love our freedoms, but we do it to ourselves," Swanson said, citing meager turnouts at the polls. Swanson spoke toward the close of the afternoon.

"A magnificent program," said James McConnell, executive director of the Michigan Committee on the Bicentennial, who attended from Lansing.

OLD AMERICAN songs were chorused by picnickers under the direction of Larry Schrock, with Ann Tueros at the piano, including: "America the Beautiful," 1893; "Bye Bye, Blackbird," 1925; "My Buddy," 1925; "Happy Days Are Here Again," 1925; "Vote for Al Smith," "Yankee Doodle Dandy," 1904; and "Home on the Range," 1873.

"Heritage Park never looked more beautiful. Spaciousness calmed, and inspired. This, indeed, was the land these forebears sought,

cherished, fought to preserve," Fox said.

Small children danced. Flags were waved. Ice cream cooled some palates. The sun lowered in the haze of the hills and came the vigorous tones of trumpet and drum, piccolo and clarinet, the chorus of voices.

"From the mountains . . . to the prairies . . . God bless America . . . My home . . . sweet . . . home . . ."

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