

Study of new senior center gets under way

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

Loretta Conway, supervisor of the Farmington-area Senior Adults Program, summed up the first meeting of a joint Farmington-Farmington Hills committee charged with finding additional space for senior activities.

"I'm thinking about all of the wonderful possibilities coming out of this," Conway said at the close of Tuesday's meeting, following 1.14 hours of discussion by committee members, city managers and other interested participants.

"Everything we own (at the rented senior center) is on wheels so it can be moved. We've never hung a picture on a wall. We've turned down wonderful offers of gifts like pianos and kilns. We've had to say no to programs that are beneficial to everyone," Conway said, referring to decreasing available space at the center and increasing numbers of participants.

Presently, the program occupies some 7,000 square feet at Mercy Center where five days a week an average of 175 seniors share noon meals, play cards and dance, create

arts and crafts, exercise and otherwise commune.

"I THINK WE can easily say we are overcrowded in all areas. We're going full tilt just to keep up with current demands," said program staffer Maggie Lortidas.

Unlike suburban neighbors such as Novi, Southfield and Troy, the Farmington area is one of only a few communities that doesn't own a facility for senior citizens, according to city managers Robert Deadman of Farmington and William Costick of Farmington Hills. Space is leased from Mercy Center this fiscal year at a cost of \$45,977.

"It's very hard to run a program when you're trying to rent space, especially now that there is more competition for that space," Costick said. Mercy's pool and gym, for example, are now available to seniors only six hours a week.

Pat Nylia, a senior activist who was named chair of the joint committee Tuesday, said most senior adults need warmer pool water.

"My friends tell me if you swim in the OCC or Y pools, you'll come out like this," she said, mimicking a crab-like position. "I'm arthritic and I need warmer water like Mercy's (pool)."

THE COMMITTEE was formed last May by the Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils, charged with examining existing facilities and proposing an ideal facility.

"You should go into this looking down the road so we won't be in the same position in five years," Costick said.

Deadman added, "Start with an ideal and then, if necessary, come down in scope. We'll have to sell any



THOMAS ARNETT/MIAMI PHOTOGRAPHER

Lunches are prepared at the current senior center at Mercy Center in Farmington Hills. A community committee is considering a new center for the area.

proposed plan to the electorate of the two cities."

Dara Tolbert, a four-year resident of Farmington Hills who wants to be "an active citizen," was elected vice-chair of the committee. Other committee members are Farmington councilwoman Shirley Richardson, Farmington Hills councilman Aldo Vagnozzi, Sister Margaret Weber of

Mercy Center, Dennis Fitzgerald of the Hills Parks & Recreation Commission, John Murphy of the Commission on Aging and citizens-at-large Kenneth Hill, Frank Reid and Marlene Carron.

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 15, in the city manager's conference room, Farmington Hills City Hall.

Conway will supply figures on existing programs and the number of participants in each, as well as summaries and architectural plans on other area centers.

Committee members will visit neighboring facilities in coming months. Recommendations are expected to be submitted to both city councils by May 1, 1989.

Be sure plan meets needs, says expert

The Farmington-area Senior Adult Program is "in the forefront of what senior adult programs should model," according to gerontologist Karen Ross of Farmington Hills, a former staffer in the Farmington-area program and now an assistant professor at Madonna College in Livonia.

Ross addressed members of the Senior Adult Activities Ad Hoc Study Committee commissioned by Farmington and Farmington Hills during their first meeting Tuesday.

"It is time for the (two) cities to consider a new senior center that would eliminate the need to compromise the professional staff, the equipment, the needs of the senior adults and the program potential,"

Ross said in a written statement submitted to each committee member.

Her recommendations include review of:

- Storage space — Due to the shortage of space, supplies for the Home Chore Program are presently stored at San Marino, away from the site of operation at Mercy Center.

- Parking — On busy days, parking space is inadequate at Mercy Center.

- Staff "physical" load — Depending upon the needs of Mercy Center, the Senior Adult Program staff must regularly vacate space by removing tables, chairs and supplies, including files and equipment.

Group holds out for 'fair' solid waste plan

Continued from Page 1

In addition to seeking permission to continue negotiations with Oak-

land County, the consortium is seeking approval from the city councils to:

- retain the consortium and

receive additional financing from the city councils.

- study the recycling of solid waste, a new mandate from the state. Fifty percent of the waste stream must be recycled, according to state goals for the year 2005, Farmington Hills public services director Tom Blasell said.

- study the benefits of creating an authority under Public Act 233 for the six consortium communities. Creation of an authority will be considered if the updated county plan does not provide equity in costs and voting power as well as facilities considered necessary by the consortium. Act 233 allows the creation of intergovernmental authorities.

communities and includes a variety of programs that satisfy the individual needs of each community within the county," according to the consortium's position paper.

WHILE THE county is revising the state required solid waste plan, a new ad hoc solid waste task force

has been created, led by Oakland County Board of Commissioners chairman Roy Rewold, R-Rochester.

"Our purpose is to look at what's going on and bring all representatives of all the groups together, including the county commissioners and county executive," said Farmington Hills city manager William

Costick, a member of the six-community consortium and the ad hoc task force.

"The idea is to figure out where we're going with this solid waste thing and to come up with a single approach that will address everyone's needs," Costick continued.

Landfill shortage, rising costs pose dilemma for cities

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Garbage is one of those issues. It has little meaning until it begins piling up on the curbside.

Members of the six-community Southwest Oakland County Solid Waste Consortium know that's how many view the issue of solid waste disposal, ever-increasing costs, the growing lack of landfills and new mandates from the state on recycling.

To help the consortium draft some alternatives and solutions for the growing solid waste problem and to gather facts of just what's out there, the Kansas City-based consulting firm, Black & Veatch was hired.

HERE ARE SOME problems and some facts about garbage that the consortium and consulting firm dug up:

- The biggest problem, other than soaring costs, is that environmentally sound landfills are becoming rare. The six permitted landfills in Oakland County are expected to be filled by the year 2000. One of those landfills is already closed.

- Recycling of solid waste in the county is minimal.

- The six consortium communities are projected to generate a total 870 tons of garbage a day by 1990. The total includes 335 tons of residential, 375 of commercial and 160 of industrial garbage.

- Southfield and Farmington Hills lead the consortium in the amount of garbage generated daily. By 1990, it's projected Farmington Hills will generate 200 tons a day; Southfield, 480; Farmington, 50; Novi, 90; Wall Lake, 30; and South Lyon, 20.

- In 1988-89, Farmington will spend \$322,190 compared to \$281,521 for garbage collection and disposal, according to the city budget. The current rate for disposal at a landfill is \$4.60 per cubic yard. It's projected that by 1993, landfill disposal will cost \$20 per cubic yard.

- In 1988-89, Farmington Hills will pay \$1.5 million for refuse removal. In the previous year, the city paid approximately \$1.3 million, according to the city budget.

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Farmington starts school again before Labor Day

Continued from Page 1

The district was also kept busy during the summer with about \$1.5 million in building improvements. Paving work was done at 13 sites, roofing at seven sites and safety storage buildings placed on 13 sites, said district architect Ron Aten. Sidewalks were also improved, and lighting and ceiling improvements were made to several pool and gymnasium areas.

Departments were also shuffled to make room for new programs.

One of these changes comes with the opening of Elementary Common Campus Elementary School this fall, a new concept that is beginning this fall with a two-year pilot.

Students will not only have regular elementary school studies, but will be allowed to enroll for elective classes in a variety of areas. Gifted students attending the school will

"Everything seems to be moving really well. A lot of work has been done this summer . . . including paving, roofing . . . it looks like a very smooth year."

— Superintendent Graham Lewis.

have their advanced classes built in to the school day, unlike other elementary students.

In the personnel area, officials and representatives for the school bus drivers continue to negotiate for a new pact. Two bargaining sessions are scheduled for this week, and personnel director Robert Coleman said he was hopeful a new contract would be reached soon.

School officials should know at the end of this week just how many stu-

dents are enrolled in the district, including how many new students are attending. According to a spokeswoman, schools will call in their head counts Friday when specific numbers will be tallied.

An overview of the past year, plus a look to the future, will be given next Tuesday, when superintendent Lewis officially presents his year-end report to the Farmington Board of Education.