

# Mayor wants stronger role

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the sake of longevity," Marks said. The city manager, he added, is supposed to serve as the administrative leader of the city.

Sever was criticized earlier in the year for interfering with city administration by, for example, attending the regularly scheduled Tuesday morning staff meetings, following the Monday night council meetings. Sever has stopped attending the meetings.

The city charter does not put a time limit on a mayoral term. But historically, each mayor has served one year. With a couple exceptions in the past, the mayor pro tem has always followed as mayor.

Though his suggestions appeared to fall on unsympathetic ears, Sever said he feels the city needs greater political leadership. He said he sometimes has a conflict between his role as mayor, representing city residents and his role representing the city council.

Two residents who endured the long meeting to comment on Sever's suggestion also opposed any change

in the mayor's role or length of term. "I see absolutely no reason to fix something that's not broken," Stockton resident Rosa Fium said.

Staten Circle resident Joanne Smith, a planning commissioner and former city councilwoman, agreed. "I think the citizens of the community spoke well when they adopted the charter we now have."

Smith supported the one-year mayor term. "You get certain things accomplished with each person as mayor," she added.

THOUGH THE city charter defines the role of the mayor, Sever said he isn't sure he interprets the wording that way. "I'm not sure the charter is as simply defined."

According to the charter: "The

mayor shall preside at meetings of the council, shall be recognized as head of the city government for all ceremonial purposes and by the governor for purposes of military law, but shall have no administrative duties."

Councilman Aldo Vagnotzi said he feels the charter's intent is clear. "Past practice has kind of cemented in the original intent." Though the mayor's term length is not addressed in the charter, "that grew up out of tradition at the conclusion of the first mayor's term," Vagnotzi added.

Sever also said it's tough to develop relationships with agencies and governmental units outside the city in one quick year. For that reason, a two-year term would go a long way in benefiting the city, he said.

Councilman Phillip Arnold disagreed. "I think the relationships built by our staff are probably much more important."

Still, Sever said he feels the mayor can do more than shake hands and attend groundbreakings. "I'm not indicating in any way it (mayoral role) isn't working or there's a deficiency. The process has worked for this city. But I think another process could be better."



*'I still have come back to the strong opinion that changing the mayor every year is not best for city government and our city.'*

— Terry Sever  
Hills mayor

# Sowerby suggests council term limit

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington Hills Mayor Terry Sever wasn't the only one looking for a change. Councilman Paul Sowerby had hoped to convince his colleagues that council terms should be limited.

Following Sever's request to change the mayor's role and term length, Sowerby asked council members whether they'd be interested in limiting the number of consecutive terms to a maximum eight years.

"Many, many elected bodies do this," Sowerby said. "There's no reason this couldn't function in a positive way in this city." He said such restrictions would go far in eliminating the perception of "a good old-boys network" in the city.

Sowerby also suggested restricting the number of consecu-

tive terms for board and commission members.

But his request, too, failed to gather any support from other council members. "It's really up to voters to decide your presence on the council," councilman Aldo Vagnotzi said.

THOUGH SEVER supported Sowerby's request, others barely responded. When Sowerby asked, "What's the harm?" others responded, "What's the benefit?"

Restricting council member's consecutive terms would require a charter amendment, approved by the public. To put the issue on the ballot, a petition would require at least 2,300 valid signatures.

Under Sowerby's plan, an eight-year council member would have to sit out a year before seeking another city council term.

## Contractors upset with school bids

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and the workmanship issue. "Do they have the backing and the schooling? If not, they're jeopardizing our children," said Smith.

"I'm very concerned for the schools getting the best bang for your buck," added Craig Morris, who represents a unionized mechanical contracting shop based in Farmington Hills. "It's for the betterment of society that we have unions."

Outgoing Farmington school board president Jack Cotton suggests the district adopt a better way to follow-up on correspondence in the coming year, and asked the board to address the use of non-union contractors.

The suggestions come as the board starts a new fiscal year and faces a most pressing issue — hiring a new school superintendent after last week's resignation of Graham Lewis.

Cotton offered his suggestions at the June 20 meeting — the last he will preside over as president. A new slate of officers for the coming year will be elected by fellow board members July 10. Outgoing officers are Cotton, vice president Helen

Prutow, treasurer Jack Inch and secretary Janice Rolnick.

Cotton's concern about correspondence was raised after Rolnick highlighted information from a large pile of letters, as she does at each meeting.

"I think many of the items we get ... can be handled with a (reply) letter," he said. "Others need follow-up. Some of these letters fall through the cracks."

THE ISSUE of using non-union contractors was raised again June 20, when several area residents spoke out against recent bid awards to non-union firms. The issue has come to light as the district does

summer fix-up projects, a major renovation project at Farmington High School and begins building a new school.

"I feel we should address this issue," Cotton said. "I don't feel comfortable when some (board members) vote their conscience ... some vote philosophically and some vote for expediency."

When the issue was first addressed this spring, the board decided not to make a policy on union vs. non-union but to handle each bid individually.

## July 4 holiday hours slated

Several closings are scheduled in observance of Independence Day on Tuesday, July 4.

Farmington Hills City Hall, Farmington City Hall, the 47th District Court, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, the Farmington Observer, Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus and all banks will be closed for the holiday.

In Farmington Hills, trash collection will be delayed one day, from Tuesday on, next week only.

In Farmington, trash collection

will not change next week.

The U.S. Postal Service will operate on a holiday schedule on Independence Day.

There will be no window, post office box service or regular mail delivery.

Only express mail, special delivery and perishables will be delivered.

Mail pickup from collection boxes will be on a holiday schedule, as posted on individual boxes. Farmington postmaster Kenneth Harris said.

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