

Community Center focus of hot debate

The Farmington Hills City Council Monday decided to discuss the controversy surrounding a Nov. 16 planning commission decision banning use of loudspeakers or amplifiers at the Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills' amphitheater.

The discussion will take place at the council's annual goals and issues study session Saturday, Jan. 20 in the city hall.

Neighbors have complained about noise from the amphitheater. Center officials say the 1-year ban will sharply curtail events and negatively affect their budget.

are not new things at the Community Center.

Now, suddenly, four people living adjacent to the center have complained about the noise from the concerts. One has complained that his children could not sleep because of the noise.

While I do sympathize with this family, it is important that we see the total picture. Why in the world would anyone raising a family move into a home adjacent to an activity known to have some noise connected with it? Surely they were not compelled to move into the home.

The planning commission could have taken the sensible approach of having experts establish a maximum decibel level of sound. Then if a neighbor files a complaint about noise, there would be an objective criterion that could establish if the complaint was justified. This would have been fair for all concerned.

Some of the planning commission took the approach that all noise is subjective, and an objective criterion should not be used. What, then, is to prevent someone a half-mile away from a high school from filing a complaint because he can hear the band practice? Or complain about a distant church bell? So the planners ruled that there could be no amplification at all from the band shell, thus eliminating its use for everything short of, I suppose, a full band.

Further, the planners ruled that a chain has to be placed across the exit and entrance to the center at the end of the day. This in spite of the recommendation of the police chief that chains not be installed because they would prevent police from patrolling the area. How many churches, schools, libraries, and businesses in Farmington Hills have chains across their entrances and exits? None that I know of.

Further still, the planners ruled that a dumpster has to be screened, even though they were told the dumpster is only being used during renovation of the kitchen. How many construction dumpsters in Farmington Hills are required to be screened? None that I know of.

Reasonable solutions are at hand. If the Farmington Hills Planning Commission will make use of them. But using an elephant gun against a mouse, as the commission has done, will not do anything for the betterment of the community. I sincerely hope that they will reconsider their astonishing actions of Nov. 16.

Kenneth F. Perria,
Farmington Hills

to its support — actually it falls short of what might be expected. To be sure, some are very supportive, but they are too few.

Perhaps many, despite much publicity to the contrary, think that the Community Center is supported by taxes — it is not. It was given and conceived as being self-supporting. That sounds like a great idea, but the expenses of quality programs simply cannot be met by the fees they generate.

The bottom line: The Community Center is running at a loss and its days might be numbered unless support is found soon. It can't be taken for granted much longer or a fanatical community asset may have to close its doors. That is the situation as it stands now. But to make matters worse, a handful of neighbors have expressed unhappiness with many of the activities and have filed a complaint with the police.

In an effort to expand its cultural impact and generate more money, the Community Center staged entertainment in its bandshell several times last summer. The musical programs did not run late, but these neighbors want all of the expensive sound equipment torn out. These people live close to a busy thoroughfare, adjacent to a park and a community center and can hardly expect there will always be total peace and quiet.

Other people living in far more remote subdivisions can hear the roar of traffic on I-69, high school bands practicing, loudspeakers from neighborhood swimming pools and sports events breaking the quiet. To be sure, no one wants a noisy city, but are all of these sources of noise to be closed down? Some things go with the territory.

The Community Center can't be just a quiet, stately, historic home for people to wander into — it must have activities, many of them, in great variety — if it is to serve the public interests.

The Community Center needs the citizens it serves to come to its rescue. It has more problems than it can handle — without your support.

Are the city council members of Farmington and Farmington Hills listening?

Bill and Kay Blakeney,
Farmington Hills

Town asset needs help

To the editor:

It goes without saying that any community fortunate enough to have, for its very own, the gift of a beautiful historic mansion, set in gracefully landscaped wooded grounds, to be used for the social, cultural and educational benefits of its citizens — is lucky indeed.

Farmington and Farmington Hills are in the fortunate position of having just such a place — the Community Center at Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile, adjacent to beautiful Heritage Park. What a tremendous combination to serve the needs of a community.

How lucky, it sounds wonderful, but there are problems — big problems. It has a very big problem meeting its operating costs. Even though a great deal of help is supplied by volunteers, a staff must be maintained to handle everyday operations, program planning and execution. Then there are the usual costs — utilities, maintenance, insurance, etc.

The great programs it offers in cultural and educational activities, as well as social gatherings and receptions, simply do not generate enough income to handle the tightly controlled overhead. To augment the fees that are generated, the Community Center annually stages a finance campaign to balance its budget.

One would think that the citizens and businesses of Farmington and Farmington Hills would rally

☉ Twice a week is better ☉ Twice a week is better ☉

Uphold vote of planners

To the editor:

The Community Center has begun a letter-writing campaign directed to the Farmington Hills City Council asking its consideration in reversing a planning commission decision prohibiting use of loudspeakers and amplifiers in the new outdoor theater.

The Community Center claims the loudspeakers and amplifiers are necessary to bring culture and family programs to this community.

The planning commission has already held three public hearings and in one-on-one, on-site study before ruling that continued use of loudspeakers and amplifiers in the outdoor theater at the Community Center be prohibited. But the Community Center is asking for still another hearing.

In the past year alone, the Farmington Hills Police have investigated at least five complaints of loud noise and loud parties at the Community Center, and one violation of disturbing the peace has been issued.

The disturbing the peace law says: "... the playing of musical instruments, phonographs, radios, televisions, tape players or any other means of sound amplification at any time or place so as to unreasonably annoy or disturb the quiet, comfort, and repose of persons in the vicinity ..."

Our city ordinance ordains that all activities of all private clubs, lodges, social and fraternal organizations be conducted within an enclosed building. The Community Center is a private organization. It is not city-owned and it is not a charitable organization.

The planning commission made it quite clear that the Community Center is not entitled to any special privileges not granted by ordinance to any other private organization, such as the Elks, the VFW, the American

Legion, the Masonic Lodge or the Moose.

Yet the Community Center has the audacity to ask the people of this community for "public cooperation and understanding" and "improve the city council to remove the "imposed barriers" when it has shown no consideration whatsoever for their neighbors' children, their neighbors' health and their neighbors' right to peace and quiet.

I urge the city council to support the decision of the planning commission.

W.C. Shortt,
Farmington Hills

Let's stand by planners

To the editor:

The Farmington Hills City Council is being urged to rescind a Nov. 16 decision of the planning commission in a letter-writing campaign by the Farmington-Farmington Hills Community Center.

The planning commission decision was to discontinue use of loudspeakers and amplifiers in the Community Center's new outdoor theater for one year.

The removal of the old outdoor theater at the Community Center and reconstruction of a new, larger outdoor theater was approved by the planning commission on June 30, 1988.

The Community Center was permitted to operate in the outdoor theater for the two summers of '88 and '89 with a review scheduled for the fall of '89.

The Community Center has claimed publicly through their attorney John Donahue that "We spent \$60,000 to build that amphitheater." But a large permanent sign in front of the theater states: "Betzak Band Shell - Donated by the Betzak Companies - 1989." Who are we to believe? Did they really spend \$60,000? I would urge the city council to

stand by the planning commissioners, whose decision to discontinue use of loudspeakers and amplifiers at the Community Center was made only after three separate in-depth meetings with all parties and a thorough on-site study of actual conditions.

The city council knows the neighbors of the Community Center are not alone in their quest for peace and quiet in the residential neighborhood of Farmington Hills.

Our frustration is dwarfed by the concerns of other residents along the freeway seeking relief from unwanted noise. Although we are but a small voice in the wilderness, we have been heard by the planning commission and trust that you will hear us also.

Donald W. Stolberg,
Farmington Hills

Editor's note: Dorothy Pfaff, Community Center executive director, acknowledged that the "Betzak Band Shell" sign is misleading. She said Betzak "contributed significantly" toward the band shell but did not donate the entire \$60,000.

Planners' vote way off base

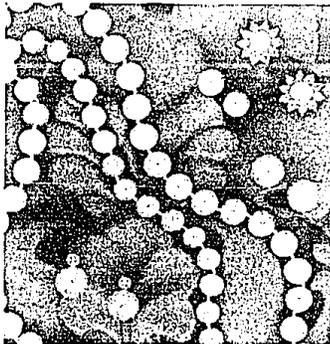
I am shocked and dismayed over the recent actions taken by the Farmington Hills Planning Commission against the Community Center.

I should say up front that I am not a disinterested party. I served on the board of the Community Center several years ago, my wife currently serves on the board and I am one of the thousands of people who have used, enjoyed and benefited from the programs put on by the center.

For 20 years, the Community Center has provided the people of Farmington/Farmington Hills with splendid outdoor activities — fairs, singing groups, musicians, etc. Outdoor activities and the noise of concerts

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Today fur. Tomorrow leather. Then wool. Then meat...

After that, medical research. Even circuses and zoos.

The animal rights activists have not hidden their intent. It's well documented in their pamphlets and manifests: they want to put an end to any activity that involves what they consider mistreatment of animals.

But they've adopted a divide and conquer strategy (After all, you can't tell people they can't eat meat right away) And they've started with the wearing of fur.

If you've been hearing their side of the issue, it's time you heard some straight talk.

The fact is, the fur industry is committed to responsible treatment of fur-bearing animals.

Our associations endorse the efforts of fur farmers to set standards for operating practices.

Garments made from endangered species are not sold in the U.S. And we strongly support regulation of trappers by local, state and federal agencies.

We have no objection to the animal rights activists not wanting to wear fur. That's their choice.

But we do object to their tactics in trying to "persuade" others to their point of view.

These tactics are out-and-out intimidation. They include everything from verbal abuse to destruction of property and violence.

In the end, we believe the decision to wear fur is a personal one. We support the freedom of individuals to buy and wear fur. This freedom is not just a fur industry issue—it's everybody's issue.

Straight Talk

FUR INFORMATION COUNCIL OF AMERICA

655 15TH STREET, NW, SUITE 320, WASHINGTON, DC 20005

Michigan Fur Conservation Association

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Plymouth, 767 S. Main 455-7800

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