

Tax break will lower rent for senior citizens

By Joanne Maliszowski
staff writer

Fern Neuhler's elderly mother would like to live in the new Carrington Place Apartments — if she could afford the rent.

"I was impressed with it. I think my mother was. But she wasn't impressed with the price," the Farmington Hills resident said.

Resident George Roberts, on the other hand, questioned the financial planning of Carrington Place partners with a tax break from the city to make it possible to provide housing for low- and moderate-income senior adults.

"If you're going to err, err on the side of caution," Roberts said.

DESPITE OPPOSITION from a couple of colleagues, the majority of council members agreed Monday to allow the Carrington Place Apartments partners to be exempted from paying taxes.

The tax exemption is possible because the Carrington partners are expecting to receive financing for the 100-unit development through the Michigan State Housing Authority, which provides 35-year, low-interest mortgages.

That means Neuhler's mother will pay lower rents if she moves into Carrington Place Apartments, on the northeast corner of Drake and Freedom roads.

Instead of the more than \$600 monthly rent, Neuhler's mother would pay \$401 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$467 for a two-bedroom, with no increases probably until spring 1991.

THE PARTNERS hope to begin the program in May.

Income restrictions will apply to tenants. MSHDA subsidies also will be available to tenants who pay more than 40 percent of their income for housing.

"We cannot arbitrarily raise the rents," said Carrington partner Sam Yaker of Liber-

ty Construction, Southfield.

Rent increases will be based on an income formula, he said.

ENACTED 5-2 Monday, the ordinance allows the partners to make an annual payment to the city instead of paying property taxes.

The payment in lieu of taxes is a percentage of the development's income from the low and moderate or "sheltered" rents.

At the agreed 4-percent payment, the partners' 1990 payment to the city in lieu of property taxes would be \$17,589.

That's compared to the \$60,000 in property taxes the partners would have paid based on the development's \$1.2 million state equalized value.

COUNCILMAN Aldo Vagnozzi suggested increasing the payment in lieu of taxes. But a 4-percent payment is needed for MSHDA financing, Yaker said.

More than 4 percent would "be unfair," Yaker said.

The city's other property tax-exempt senior developments — Taploia Apartments I and II on Eight Mile, between Gill and Hazelwood — make a 4-percent payment.

MAYOR Jean Fox and councilman Terry Sever opposed the ordinance.

"I'm not comfortable with the way this has come about," said Fox, opposing the tax exemption.

The exemption wasn't requested before construction, she said.

Sever requested a postponement for more information.

"My concern is the type of precedent this will set for other senior housing properties who are having difficulty," Sever said.

He suggested that the partners should contribute in some way to the community's senior adult programs.

"Why not look for help from people who are going to save a few bucks over the next 35 years?"

But councilman Ben Marks disagreed.

"We've never sunk to blackjacking someone to get something."

OTHER COUNCIL members rallied to the prospect of having more low- and moderate-income senior adult housing.

Council members Nancy Bates and Lawrence Lichtman said they don't mind the partners benefiting from the tax exemption.

"As far as I know, this is still a capitalistic society. I don't have a problem with someone making a profit," Bates said.

"I think it makes little difference what benefit to the proprietors of Carrington Place may be," Lichtman said.

"Now it gives us the opportunity to provide much needed, low-cost senior housing in the city."

Concern about a "tax abatement" for Carrington Place is "overstated," Lichtman said.

"I think the effect on other taxpayers is inconsequential."

Hills rejects proposal to prohibit banner signs

By Joanne Maliszowski
staff writer

Unfair.

That's what some Farmington Hills merchants call a proposed ban on use of banner signs for advertisement.

"Farmington Hills is a community surrounded by other communities which do allow their businesses the use of signs. It will put us at a disadvantage if we cannot display our signs as they display theirs," said Ron Asmar of the Vineyards Wine Cellar, 32418 Northwestern Highway.

Martin Rubin of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan, 30375 Northwestern Highway, said

the proposed ordinance change is "difficult to comprehend," and asked for a postponement for further review.

David Gronbach of Ace Hardware, 29615 Orchard Lake Road, said stronger enforcement of existing sign restrictions would be more appropriate.

"We do understand that some businesses may use them in an excessive or unsightly manner, however, to ban the use completely we believe would be unfairly penalizing all retailers," Gronbach said.

"I think there is enough reason for you to delay action until some more reasonable restrictions could be introduced into it," said Jody Soronen,

Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce executive director. "They do seem to feel, overall, it's too restrictive."

THE FARMINGTON Hills City Council agreed with merchants Monday and denied 4-3 the proposed ordinance to ban banners in any land use district.

Mayor Jean Fox and council members Nancy Bates and Aldo Vagnozzi opposed the denial.

"We're getting to get pretty tucky in some neighborhoods," Fox said. "I certainly wouldn't want to flout my business in the face of community standards. And I think this is beginning to happen."

Bates and Vagnozzi agreed that the use of banner signs to advertise

has become aesthetically displeasing.

"As you drive around the community, there are some excesses," Vagnozzi said.

But other council members disagreed.

"It seems we're taking an anti-business attitude," Ben Marks said. "I don't think people in Farmington Hills have misused the sign ordinance. I don't think we should be throwing roadblocks in front of our people."

Jonathan Grant said he doesn't mind the use of banners for grand openings and sales. Some restrictions should apply. "But the ordinance, as written, is far too restrictive." Grant suggested working with the chamber of commerce to devel-

op more equitable restrictions.

VAGNOZZI SAID he was concerned that if the ordinance was denied, the Farmington Hills Planning Commission, which proposed the tough restrictions, will "drop it."

Bates wanted planning commissioners to further review the ordinance with the business community.

"There's no rule that the planning commission is the only place from which a proposed ordinance can emanate," councilman Lawrence Lichtman said.

Though she received no specific direction, Soronen later said she would contact city officials to offer the chamber's help in developing a better definition of signs/banners

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Student attends leadership confab

A Mercy High junior took part in the 1990 National Young Leaders Conference in Washington.

Jennifer Jorissen, 16, was one of 400 high school juniors and seniors from around the nation specially invited to attend the six-day forum, sponsored by the Congressional Youth Leadership Council.

"I really learned a lot," the Farmington Hills resident said. "I learned how our government works."

"It was really interesting to be there and see the senators debate a bill and be in the Capitol Building when all that is happening," she added.

Students were selected based on

demonstrated academic achievement, leadership and citizenship.

Jorissen plans to attend college and possibly pursue a career in education or psychology.

The conference theme was, "The Leaders of Tomorrow Meeting the Leaders of Today." The young scholars met with key leaders and newsmakers from the three branches of government, the media and the diplomatic corps.

Jorissen's most memorable experience was the breakfast panel discussion led by the National Press Club with renowned journalists like Susan King, who recently returned from Nicaragua.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS included welcoming remarks from a member of Congress on the floor of the House of Representatives and a government relations forum featuring lobbyists from various corporations and public interest groups.

For a brief moment, Jorissen met with U.S. Sen. Donald Riegle Jr., D-Mich. Later, she was able to talk with his aide, who explained Senate procedures.

"We firmly believe that by touching one life, the National Young Leaders Conference enriches thousands more," stated CYLC co-founders Barbara Harris and Richard Rossi in a press release.

"Scholars return to their communities charged with the lifelong duty of leading all Americans to better understand their rights and responsibilities in this participatory democracy," they said.

The CYLC was founded in 1985. The nonprofit, non-partisan educational organization is committed to recognizing outstanding youth and providing "hands on" learning experience about government in the nation's capital.

clarification

A story about the proposed Haggerty Connector in the Monday, March 12 Observer should have said that the city of Farmington Hills does not have a wetlands ordinance.

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