

# Hills eyes using grant money for code officer

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Some Old Town residents are asking why federal grants are popular for what Farmington Hills wants, but won't pay for with local tax dollars.

The latest example, residents say, is a new code enforcement officer city officials want specifically for southeast Farmington Hills.

"Every time something comes up that qualifies the city for the (Community Block Grant) money, we always have to take it out of the federal money. Maybe instead of giving our taxes to the city, we should mail it to the federal government," said Massie Kurzeja, Old Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association treasurer.

Some of the residents also believe that proper training of code enforcement officers would help clear up

blight and other code and zoning problems in the city's older areas. These areas, they say, are not considered a priority.

City officials want to use \$40,000 of the total \$355,000 proposed 1990-91 block grant budget to hire a new code enforcement officer specifically for the federally designated, low- and moderate-income areas.

The idea stemmed from a March meeting at which Old Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association officers told the city council that southeast Farmington Hills is plagued with blight, such as junk cars and large trucks.

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS haven't changed their minds about that. But they see no need to hire an officer specifically for southeast Farmington Hills or to use block grant money.

The city council Monday postponed a decision on the 1990-91

\$355,000 block grant budget because councilmen Lawrence Lichtman and Ben Marks were absent. A decision will be made either April 16 or 23.

The city is expected to receive \$298,000 in block grant money. About \$60,000 in housing rehabilitation loan repayments will be added to that for a total of \$358,000.

The proposed allocation includes \$52,000 for administration, \$60,000 in capital improvements, \$206,000 for housing rehabilitation and \$40,000 for code enforcement. Money for code enforcement would come out of capital improvements, which originally was allocated \$100,000.

"It would be difficult to add a position such as this and fund it out of property taxes," Costick said. Block grant money is a way of financing the position without making it a tax burden.

Councilman Aldo Vagozzi agreed with residents that a code enforce-

ment officer is needed throughout the city. "I would ask the city manager if this can be financed out of city funds."

STILL DETERMINED that the city should use its money for code enforcement, Kurzeja nonetheless said enforcement is so needed, she would support using federal funds for only one year.

Training is the big problem according to Old Town resident George Roberts. "... The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing," he said. "I think you would be wise to take that money and educate these people."

Zoning supervisor Lee Bilzman said officers attend courses and seminars, some in-house. Three of the four code enforcement officers recently attended courses offered by the Michigan Municipal League, for example.

Code enforcement staff review or-

dinances together, discussing how provisions apply. New officers also go out in the field with the more experienced officers.

"They (officers) know what to look for. There is so much (to look for) that even if you get a good proportion of it, you won't get it all," Bilzman said, responding to residents' criticism that officers don't notice all they should when inspecting.

Of the city's four zoning/code enforcement officers, three are out in the field. If block grant money is used, as allowed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a new officer would be restricted to income eligible areas. Costick said that would free an existing officer for other areas.

Kurzeja reminded the city council of how they found the money in the budget to finance the Year 2000 publication, a citywide attitude survey and another \$200,000 for a proposed

Farmington Road sidewalk.

"It appears the impression is we are not a priority from the way things are handled," Kurzeja said.

A RECREATIONAL vehicle parked in a driveway in affluent Woodcreek subdivision in northeast Farmington Hills was ordered removed when the issue came before the zoning board of appeals. If it had been in Old Town, "it would have existed forever," ZBA member Kurzeja said.

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## State to help pay for 12 Mile boulevard

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Another mile link in the long-planned 12 Mile boulevard in Farmington Hills will be built with the help of state money.

Farmington Hills has been awarded its second matching grant for \$3.6 million through the Michigan Transportation Economic Development Fund to build the one mile stretch from Halsted to Haggerty in 1991, said assistant city manager David

Call.

This is the second grant from the state economic development fund for the planned four-mile-long boulevard from Farmington to Haggerty roads.

The first was for \$3.2 million for the mile stretch between Farmington and Drake roads. Total cost of the first phase is less than \$6 million. Construction is expected to begin on this phase in mid-May.

About \$2.3 million in motor vehicle bonds will be sold to pay Farm-

ington Hills' share of the first segment, Farmington to Drake roads. The second stretch, for which the city just received the grant, is another matter.

"We don't know where the city will get matching funds (for the second segment, Halsted to Haggerty). We don't really think we have enough bond capability for both miles," Call said.

CITY OFFICIALS applied for both grants under the state funds

economic growth category for areas experiencing development along a major road incapable of handling the growth.

The third phase, Drake to Halsted, is not experiencing development. That means that at least for now it is unlikely the city can apply for the same type of grant. "We need to show what companies are building in the area. We don't know how well it will do," Call said.

Though 12 Mile is under Oakland County Road Commission jurisdic-

tion, officials have long said they don't have the money to share costs for the improvements. To help with the project, the road commission has done construction engineering for the first phase, Call said.

City officials have long planned to widen the office corridor, not only to relieve traffic congestion, but also to provide for economic development.

Because construction phases won't follow each continuous mile of the road, some traffic backup is expected.

## Plan would put walks on Farmington Road

The Farmington Hills City Council will decide at 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 16, whether to build sidewalks on Farmington Road, between 12 and 13 Mile.

City officials listened to residents' concerns Monday but postponed action because councilmen Larry Lichtman and Ben Marks were absent.

City officials propose putting a new sidewalk on the east side from 12 Mile to Heartstone and from Kendallwood to 13 Mile. On the west side, the sidewalk would be from

Bayberry to 13 Mile. Some residents, however, oppose to the proposed sidewalks. They said they are concerned about safety along the busy thoroughfare, as well as liability and snow removal.

The city requires property owners to keep sidewalks clear of snow. But some residents have as much 120 feet or even 155 feet that they would be responsible for plowing.

"It's very costly and we have many, many miles of sidewalks," said city manager William Costick, responding to whether the city could

be responsible for snow removal.

Councilman Aldo Vagozzi had few supporters for his suggestion that a sidewalk be installed only on one side of the road, which is under the Oakland County Road Commission jurisdiction.

Later this year, city officials plan to ask county officials to swap juris-

diction of Farmington Road for 14 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Haggerty roads.

"We can't control speed. We can't control snow removal. It (Farmington Road) would be our road. And we have it our way," Mayor Jean Fox said.

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