

Hills officials pick new legal counsel

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Well-known municipal attorney John Donohue is coming home as the new Farmington Hills city attorney, replacing 22-year veteran Paul Bibeau.

"I'm delighted. I'm looking forward to getting back," Donohue said Monday night, following the city council's selection of his law firm, Kohl, Secrest, Wardle, Lynch, Clark and Hampton of Farmington Hills, to represent the city.

The council's selection brings Donohue back to representing the city

after a nine-year absence. Donohue worked with Bibeau and the late Terry Brennan, township and city attorneys, until 1981, when he went to work for Kohl, Secrest.

Donohue's firm was selected as city attorneys for the city of Farmington in fall 1988 when long-time city attorney Robert Kelly retired. The firm also represents the cities of Walled Lake and Auburn Hills. Donohue also has done work for Oakland County.

Donohue is now representing Farmington Hills in a zoning dispute with Boys Republic.

COUNCIL MEMBERS Ben Marks

and Nancy Bates voted against Donohue's firm. At Bates' request, the vote was later changed to a unanimous endorsement of the firm.

The selection came a week later than expected. Bates asked the council June 4 to interview the three top firms again. The other firms were Sherman and Sherman, Birmingham; and Levin, Levin, Garrett and Dill, Southfield.

The council chose the three firms in a straw vote at a study session three weeks ago. Six law firms were interviewed.

Donohue said three or four attorneys will be assigned to Farmington

Hills, but he will serve as the official city attorney at city council meetings.

Councilman Lawrence Lichtman said he was "impressed with the knowledge, preparation and candor" of Kohl, Secrest. "I think they have the respect of our staff members."

City Manager William Costick is expected to negotiate a contract with the new firm.

Bibeau and his firm, Larson, Harms, Wright & Bibeau, are expected to work with Donohue's firm to ensure a smooth transition. Bibeau's contract expires June 30.

THE CITY council a year ago decided to review its consultants, including city attorney and city planner.

But Bibeau announced in April his firm would not seek annual contract renewal.

Bibeau joined Larson, Harms & Wright early last year after he disbanded his firm, Brennan, Bibeau & Pochman. Last July, the new firm was given a one-year contract.

"I think we're all very appreciative of Paul's efforts. I think it's probably unfortunate that after all these years we can't emphasize that more strongly," Lichtman said.



John Donohue

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