

Community Corner

This week's question:
Do you remember
the first time you
voted?

We asked this question
at the Downtown
Farmington Center.



It was a presidential election while I was in college. It would have been Ford versus Carter.
— Brenda Kellams Naler
Farmington Hills



Presidential election when I was 18. I voted for Gerald Ford.
— Jeri Soultsoe
Novi



I think it was 1964. I split my ticket and voted for Goldwater.
— Terry Mobbs
Farmington Hills



I don't remember. Sorry. I guess it was when I was 18 in 1972, just out of high school.
— Joe Schornack
Farmington



It might have been 1952 when Dwight Eisenhower got in. I voted for him. It's a name to remember.
— Mary Pennington
Livonia



It'd have to be for Richard Nixon in 1972.
— Kathleen Dobbs
Farmington

Decibel debate not over yet for Hills

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Bill Shortt disagrees with an expert who conducted a noise study in Farmington Hills.

"If we're going to try to make Farmington Hills a nice, quiet place to live, we should stick with 55 (decibels)," said the Farmington Road resident.

But a proposed Farmington Hills noise ordinance that's still being fine-tuned calls for an acceptable noise level that's a bit louder.

For example, 65 decibels would be the allowable noise level in residential areas from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. A 55 decibel limit would be allowable in the same area from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Commercial and industrial districts would have an allowable 70 decibel limit during the day hours and 60 decibel for commercial at night and 65 for industrial at night.

"The idea here is to arrive at an objective level to deal with citizen complaints from noise," said city attorney John Donohue. "It would also provide guidelines for future development."

CITY OFFICIALS admitted they had no idea what 55 or 60 or 65 decibels sounds like. John Swanson of

Swanson Environmental, Inc., which conducted a noise study in Farmington Hills as a basis for a noise ordinance, gave an example.

A large dog barking at 10 feet from you would probably register 80-90 decibels. At 100 feet away, it would register up to 70 decibels and at 300 feet, about 65 decibels, Swanson said.

The proposed ordinance also allows certain kinds of noise for a certain duration of time. But there's penalties and allowances for that.

This is where you get into allowances or penalties for noise that's being permitted," said Donohue.

Swanson gave the example of a resident using a woodchipper. Under the proposed ordinance, the resident would be limited in how long he could make noise with the woodchipper.

"We're saying you can't operate more than one minute without getting a variance," Swanson said.

Some city council members were surprised to hear that. "It (the ordinance) could very well turn into a witch hunt," councilman Ben Marks said.

But Donohue said the city will have a noise meter. "What I'm trying to avoid is precisely a witch hunt. With a meter it can be determined that, yes, it violates the noise

ordinance and you'll get a ticket. Or 'no. It doesn't violate the noise ordinance, we're sorry for bothering you.'"

The noise study, however, also showed that noise limits were higher closer to major roads and freeways and lower in the middle of residential areas.

CONSEQUENTLY, IF 65 decibels is allowed on the fringes of a residential area near roads, the ordinance needs additional language to prevent the center of residential areas from increasing from 55 decibels — as measured in the noise study — to 65 near the fringes.

That's where Shortt, one of several residents who worked with Swanson and Donohue on the noise issue, disagrees. The city already has ordinances to prohibit nuisances.

"What we have done here is measure the road noise," he said.

That's why he'd like to see a 65 decibel limit for the city for example within a main road. Residential areas should have a maximum 55 decibels. Shortt said it's better to have an overall 65 decibel limit for the city instead of including a list of allowances.

Donohue said he is concerned about Shortt's idea. "Once you say 55 is an acceptable maximum in single family districts, you are putting a

good deal of single family neighborhoods in the city in a non-conforming situation."

Shortt, who with Farmington Road resident Donald Stoberg who also worked with Donohue and Swanson, complained about noise at the Farmington Community Center last year.

Originally a noise study grew out of complaints about the center and its outdoor concerts. But city officials soon realized any noise ordinance must cover the entire city, said David Call, assistant city manager.

Shortt also checked with other communities to determine what, if any, noise levels they have.

City staff are expected to check with other communities and determine how they established noise levels and how the levels are enforced, Call said.

"A lot of these places (other communities) have 55 (decibel limits). Why can't we have 55 in residential," Shortt asked.

For example, Shortt said that the Michigan Department of Transportation requires a minimum noise level of 67 decibels before an area is eligible for noise buffers along a freeway.

"If that's the criteria for them, we should be much lower in the neighborhoods," Shortt added.

Engineers testing tower's noise level

Continued from Page 1

something and they're hoping that a proposed noise ordinance for Farmington Hills will continue to regulate the noise.

HOSPITAL OFFICIALS are taking the complaints seriously and have hired an acoustical engineer to test the area, particularly the nearby residential section to see just how loud the new tower really is.

"We're working on all fronts," said Dave Fergusson, the hospital's director of design and construction.

The cooling towers provide air conditioning for the hospital. The new system uses about 1,500 gallons of water per minute. Fergusson too, described the noise from the new system "as a jet engine."

The system has been operative since last year. But the majority of complaints have come during the recent hot weather when the system has been up and running.

With the rash of complaints Fergusson has agreed not to run the new cooling system until the noise problem is fixed. City officials also are aware of the com-

plaints but as of late Tuesday, the Observer could not determine through city officials whether placement of the new cooling tower passed muster with the city's planning and zoning procedures.

THE NEIGHBORS say they're thankful the hospital has acknowledged their complaints.

Cook, who said she's been in contact with Fergusson, had microphones put in her yard by an acoustical engineer hired by the hospital to determine the level of the noise and how to fix the problem.

Fergusson said that some of the problems with the new cooling tower stem from it being taller than the older ones, closer to the neighborhood, having a two-speed fan, which is noisier when it's between speeds, having control problems and being noisier when set on the higher cycle.

"We're tackling this on a multifaceted basis," Fergusson said.

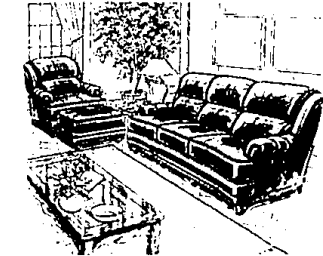
Screening walls and avoiding putting the new equipment on high speed are two immediate options Fergusson is considering.

The cooling system is visible from Cook's front porch and the second story of her house.

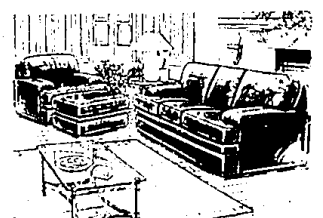
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