

Hills hears recycling fee arguments

By JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

If you want your say in how the tab is paid for recycling in Farmington Hills, you'll get your chance will be at a 7 p.m. budget meeting Wednesday, May 13, in city council chambers.

You won't be the only one there to speak your mind: Patrick Anderson, a director of Taxpayers United for the Michigan Constitution — who disagrees with recycling fees charged in Farmington and Farmington Hills — was granted his request to speak before the council on the city's recycling fee.

"If other communities can find their way to let voters decide on this issue, Farmington and Farmington Hills should be able to," said Anderson, assistant vice president of government affairs with Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance, Farmington Hills.

Other communities that have placed the recycling issue on the ballot are Oxford, Milford, Shelby Township and Novi, Anderson said.

May 26 is the deadline for putting a recycling issue on the ballot in both Farmington and Farmington Hills. Both cities, however, are not forced to take the same action.

The Farmington City Council has not scheduled specific discussion about recycling fees. "Whatever will occur will be a year from this coming July," said Farmington City Manager Robert J. Dodman. Council members probably "will get their own minds set" on the issue and see what Farmington Hills does, he added.

After recycling began in July 1991, Anderson told city officials the fee is unconstitutional. The fee is the type of issue that drove voters to pass the 1978 Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment, which the fee violates, he said.

As a mandatory fee, plus its enforcement by a tax lien, makes the fee — in reality — a property tax. City attorney John Donohue disagreed with Anderson when he first raised the issue. The fee would be a tax if money generated exceeded the costs of the program, Donohue said.

Taxes and user fees are both involuntary, mandatory and enforceable when not paid. With taxes, there is no promise from government for specific uses. Specific activities of users are promised with a user fee, Donohue said.

Anderson says he prefers a "true user fee" where those who wish to participate in the program pay. Also, no public vote would be necessary. Non-payment would call for property lien, not a tax lien.

"Ninety-nine percent of residents would probably use it. It would also leave us the freedom to go some place else for the service," Anderson said. Both cities have a six-year contract for solid waste collection and disposal, and recycling, with Waste Management Inc.

Anderson also has suggested two other methods of paying for recycling: levy an ad valorem tax or flat tax, which is what Anderson believes the cities are now doing.

The ad valorem tax would be levied against property value or assessment. In this case, some property owners — based on their property tax assessment — would pay more or less than others. This can be done without voter approval in both cities because neither has yet reached their voter-approved charter millage limits.

A flat tax — a new tax — on each residential parcel, such as \$100, must be approved by voters, Anderson said.

Dodman said the fee charged by the cities is the most equitable. Businesses are not involved in the program, for example. A tax would force those who don't use the service to pay.

'Daddy Rich' bows out among friends

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The man they call "Daddy Rich" sure knows how to throw a farewell party. Even if he labeled it an Irish Wake.

When Chuck Daly Tuesday afternoon officially announced his retirement from the Detroit Pistons after coaching them for nine seasons, just about everybody who is anybody in this town — and their TV crews — showed up at his West Bloomfield restaurant, the Great Northern.

Even though the hundreds of folks who knew and appreciated Daly over the years were ready to receive the final word of his exit, a celebratory atmosphere somehow remained. And that upbeat mood prevailed even when

the dapper coach was a little late for his scheduled 3:30 p.m. press conference.

Salley stepped in

"I'm filling in for Chuck," said Pistons forward John Salley, putting on a bit of a show for the assembled at the appointed hour. "My plans... I don't know, (to) go somewhere where they like me. Cut him! Laimbeer. No, I'll make him my assistant."

With that, Salley laughed along with everybody else, then sat down next to Laimbeer, Isiah Thomas and several other teammates in booths off to the podium's right to quietly wait for Daly to tell the world what he probably already knew.

The Pistons' players weren't alone, of course. Daly's bosses and other Pistons officials were there. His wife, Terry, was there. Heck, even Bill Buntz was there.

Finally the moment arrived for the dignitaries and media throng alike, with the resplendently-dressed-as-always Daly strolling up to the podium at about 3:40 p.m.

Media zoo

"This is an Irish Wake," Daly said. "But I'm half-Scottish, so you can have one drink and not too much food."

Directly facing the coach in the front row of folding chairs were his wife, Bonds, some others... Behind them were a number of other reporters, furiously taking notes,

and a virtual curtain of TV cameras and photographers.

"Yesterday I was doing some things, thinking about Isiah, Bill (Laimbeer)," Daly said, referring to the two Pistons on his team throughout his nine-year tenure. "When you coach basketball in the NBA you spend eight months a year together, basically every day."

"That's 72 months. Six years of their lives for these two people. We've been together every single day."

Next, Daly thanked the media and the fans for their support, remembered Pistons from his first Detroit teams ("the Kelly Tripuk and Kent Benson") and recalled how now-husky Orchard Lake Road was but a two-lane highway in 1983.



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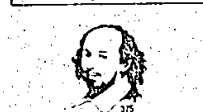
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