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Kimberley paving plan OK'd

Kimberley subdivision residents are arguing a \$4,000 assessment cost right down to the cent, and some were getting red doing it.

For the third time, the Farmington Hills City Council listened to residents opposed to the nearly \$1.5 million repaving project during a cost hearing Monday.

Residents agree the 3.5 miles of subdivision roadway needs to be repaved; they question the cost and scope of the project as well as how it was presented.

"I feel like I'm being taken," said Hillarman resident Brendan Fitzpatrick.

Residents in the southeastern Farmington Hills subdivision will pay nearly \$4,000; some 37 corner lots are assessed more because they conceivably receive more benefit.

The road repaving - though supported by 56 percent of the subdivision's residents - continues to generate numerous complaints from those opposed.

Those complaints have come despite the city covering 20 percent of the cost and that the project is below initial cost projections. The road will last 15

years, which is longer than any other options considered.

At a November meeting, council offered residents a chance to take their names off the petition.

Such acrimony is why one council member has sought to change the way residents are assessed.

"I don't like (special assessment districts). I don't like that they pit neighbor against neighbor and they go on for a long time," said Councilwoman Vicki Barnett.

Council members, who admit the current method has flaws, decided to stay with it after discussing the matter during a January study session.

Assessing homeowners on frontage and benefit has also withstood court challenges, said John Donohue, Hills city attorney.

"I know that those who live on corner lots don't feel they get a benefit from paving, except when they sell their property," said Donohue, noting the results of homes corner lots is often higher.

That's of little consolation to Eric Larson, who recently moved to Kimberley and will pay \$760 more on the assessment for his

corner lot.

As for his corner-lot premium, Larson said, "I've already paid that price."

Another resident complained he hadn't been presented a cost breakdown of the \$1.5 million project, which includes engineering fees and 10 percent contingency for cost overruns.

Councilman Jerry Ellis asked that the vote be delayed a week so the cost breakdown can be provided to residents. "I don't want to open it up again, but I want to see the numbers broken down," Ellis said.

Instead, the council agreed to hold off awarding the contract but approved the assessment in a 5-0 vote. Mayor Aldo Vignozzi, who lives in Kimberley, abstained, and Councilman Terry Sever was absent.

Another council member reiterated that the city is acting on the request of the majority of subdivision residents, who asked that the roads be repaved.

"We don't decide you need your road paved and send people on the street (with petitions). You come to us," Councilwoman Nancy Bates said. "It's nothing we start."

'net gains



At the library: It's National Library Week and the options are endless. At left, Farmington High School students (from left) Teestra Kaur, Tania Sandhu and Sharan Lohit travel the Internet at a computer at the Farmington Hills branch of the Farmington Community Library.

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