

# Election workers get pay raise

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Farmington Hills election workers will get a few more dollars for a day's work — a long day's work.

On election day, a precinct worker shows up at 6:15 a.m. and, depending on whether people are voting for president or city council, doesn't call it quits until 10 p.m.

Pay for 14-plus hours work had been \$80 a day for inspectors and \$95 for precinct chairs. That rate paled in comparison to other cities.

In Novi, election workers get \$7.25 an hour while those in Livonia receive a flat rate of \$95.

At the request of City Clerk Kathy Dornan, the Farmington Hills City Council unanimously voted to raise the sum to \$100 for precinct workers and \$120 for chairs at Monday's meeting.

Pay raises take effect in time for the Nov. 2 election.

"It's time," Dornan said, "it's



**Request: Farmington Hills City Clerk Kathy Dornan asked the city council to increase the pay for election workers, who have not had a raise in three years.**

been three years since they have received an increase."

Farmington Hills has a roster of 350 election workers, most of whom are seniors. Anywhere from 150-300 work at the city's 27 precincts on election night.

The pool of those willing to give up an entire day in August or November is dwindling, Dornan said. Reasons: Many cite the time involved and some seniors move to warmer areas before November elections.

Then there are those like Marie Cole, who has been a precinct chair for more than 20 years. She works in Precinct No. 2 at North Farmington High.

"I'm in my own precinct. I got to see people I know and people I'd like to go to," Cole said. "I love it. It's a long, long day, though."

Cole doesn't expect a wind-fall pay-wise. She's pleased with the city's increase.

"I sounds good to me," she said. "It's nice to have a few extra dollars."

Helping fuel the raise is the fact election workers can now pick where they work.

A year ago, a new law allowed precinct employees to work in any community in the county where they live. Before, people could only work in the community where they resided.

That's why it's important that pay rates remain comparable, Dornan said.

"When I talk with other city clerks, I think everybody is having the same problem: getting and keeping workers," Dornan said.

# City council eyes closed session for Eleven Pines

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The door remains open for three developers to build on the Eleven Pines project, but the door might be shutting to the public on further talks.

Some Farmington Hills city officials propose going into executive session with Bertak, CED/ Selective and Crosswinds in talks to develop site at 11 Mile and Halsted, which includes expanding San Marino Golf Course from 9 to 18 holes.

Until now, developers have talked about their proposals in open public meetings. Councilman Jerry Ellis suggested details be worked out behind closed doors, noting that negotiations involve real estate.

The sale of land sales and purchases are exempt from the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

Ellis said he'd like to hear from each developer without other builders present.

"So when someone comes in with a creative idea, it's their idea," Ellis said.

One developer, Al Ludwig of CED/ Selective Group, likes Ellis' idea.

"As this process has developed, we've seen some of our ideas blend into other proposals," Ludwig said.

At Monday's meeting, the Hills city council narrowed the pool to three hopefuls. The city will select one developer for the residential and commercial project.

The city staff's recommendation included proposals from four developers, but the council dropped The PM Group's bid.

The council narrowed the field to three in a 4-3 vote. Council members Jon Grant, Vicki Barnett, Cheryl Oliverio and Ellis voted yes. Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and councilwomen Nancy Bates and Jody Soronen voted to include The PM Group's plan.

## DEVELOPMENT

"I think we had a very good proposal," said Tony Bashore of The PM Group. "I don't think we communicated our proposal as effectively as we could have."

Bertak, CED/ Selective, Crosswinds and The PM Group all met the \$7 million benchmark city staff believes is needed to rezone land costs.

However, Ellis said he had difficulty with the 30-year lease arrangement proposed by The PM Group.

"I found it very confusing," Ellis said.

The Bertak, CED/ Selective and Crosswinds bid deal with key issues: a clubhouse, bridge or tunnel over Halsted and financial resources. At least one bid includes a driving range, while another deals with the natural view, Ellis said.

"These three seem to have a balance in the housing they propose and where they propose it," Ellis said.

City Attorney John Donohue said the request to move negotiations to closed sessions would have to be reviewed. "What you are proposing, I think, would be acceptable," Donohue said.

Vagnozzi suggested a study session instead, which would allow residents to attend. Developers couldn't be excluded from those meetings, Barnett said.

Grant favors closed meetings, too.

"I think that is where we're going to be the most effective," Grant said, "and ultimately where we're going to get the best package put together."

City Manager Steve Brock said he'd look into ways to close the deal, "without having to stretch the spirit and intent of the opening meetings act."

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