

Credit union gets planning approval

BY SUE BUCK
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The Suburban Family Credit Union in Farmington has gotten halfway through the necessary city approvals to expand and add a drive-through.

The Farmington Planning Commission recommended approval of a rezoning request from R-1 to C-2 at its July 9 meeting, following a public hearing.

Credit union officials had asked to rezone the residential lot north of the credit union to a commercial designation, so they can upgrade the facility and provide a needed convenience for their customers.

"Most people live in their cars," said David Russell, CEO and manager of the credit union.

Located on Grand River at Lakeway, the business also

■ **'There's plenty of spaces... where they could expand.'**
Mike Smith
—Resident

has a drive-through window. An original motion to deny the rezoning made by Commissioners Jim Pogue and seconded by William Ingalls failed by majority vote. A second motion, this time to approve, was made by Margaret (Mardy) Stirling, supported by Pam Lysaght. That passed, with Pogue and Alton Bennett voting no.

Mike Smith, a Lakeway resident, said 62 signatures were collected from residents opposing the rezoning. "There's plenty of spaces in Farmington where they could expand," he said.

Planning chairwoman Terri Morency told residents the signatures on the petitions didn't "carry a lot of weight" with her.

If the credit union moved, it could stay vacant "in its current ugly state," she said. "I don't think it is intruding into the residential area."

"We appreciate the effort to get the petitions signed," Stirling said.

Charles Woods, a Lakeway resident, complained about the trash which collects around the property. "They have never taken care of the property," Woods said.

Helen Stulock, a Lakeway resident, said she didn't think it was right to take more residential land. She called the credit union a private lending firm and said because she wasn't a member of a church on the credit union's membership list, she couldn't use the establishment.

"We are not a private club," Russell said. "Your church can register and then you can join."

The credit union purchased the property in 1963. It purchased an adjacent home in October 1998.

Assistant City Manager Bill Richards said the home, which was removed for the expansion, wasn't an historic home or in the historical district.

Other vacant buildings in the city could not accommodate a drive-through nor could present buildings located in plazas, Bennett said.

Commissioner Bill Burke said he understood residents' feelings. Were the credit union to move, residents might have a development they liked less. Someone could build multiple housing, condominiums, even thought the area is small.

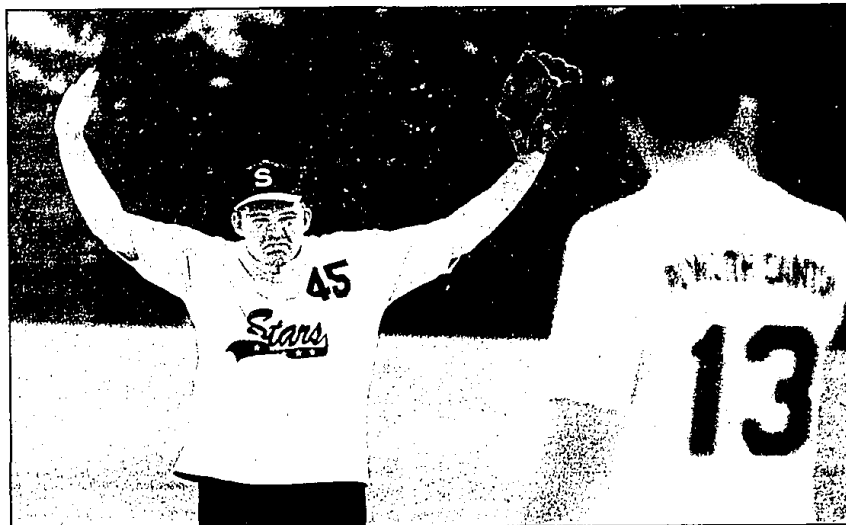
The commission also approved a site and landscape plan contingent on the council's rezoning, a sprinkler system being installed in the landscape area and placement of a berm on the west end of the wall.

The commission referred the issue of traffic control in the area to the traffic and safety board.

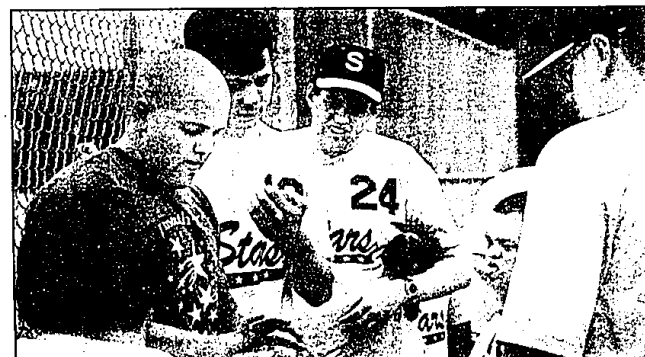
About 4,500 Suburban Credit Union members live in the Farmington area, Russell said. Suburban has 15 branches in the metropolitan-Detroit area; 21 in the state of Michigan.

The rezoning request next goes before the Farmington City Council Aug. 6.

Softball Saturday



Big winner: Justin Strabbing, 19, of Canton, celebrates a victory at Saturday's Special Olympics Softball tournament.



Special Olympians: A recent Special Olympics softball tournament held in Farmington Hills, drew more participants than last year, said Ted Stern, director of Team Farmington Special Olympics. "There were more than 300 players," Stern said. "There were lots of close games." The 11th annual event was held at Drake Field, on Drake Road, south of Grand River. Plymouth Public Safety offers were among many volunteers. Donations are the primary funding source for the event. Participants are people with special needs who must be at least eight years old. There is no upper age limit. Teams traveled from as far as Lansing and Roscommon. Pictured left, Plymouth-Canton Stars softball coach, Jon Lafave, 22 of Canton, gives his team the line up for batting the next inning.

STAFF PHOTOS BY HEATHER SONNTAG

Finlayson returns from Trek, in time for sister's pageant bid

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Kerri Finlayson has two important reasons to come to Farmington this week.

Her sister, Tracy, is a contestant in the Miss Farmington pageant Wednesday.

"I know she's going to win," Kerri said confidently.

Then there's the other more international reason that's bringing Kerri to town. Formerly of Farmington, Finlayson was one of the 12 women who took part in Womenquest's Polar Trek 2001. She will speak at The Benchmark Outdoor Outfitters in a free presentation at 7 p.m. July 19.

The women are described as "ordinary women doing extraordinary things."

"As outdoor outfitters, we helped sponsor her," said Noelle Couvreur who is handling the publicity for The Benchmark. Each woman needed to raise \$11,000 for the trip April 16-24. The trek marked the first time an all-woman group reached the North Pole from a Russian-based departure. The team traveled more than 150 miles on skis in subzero conditions.

"People needed to be flown out of a floating ice station called Borneo," Finlayson said. It was manned by Russian pilots who were trained in Siberia. A runway was carved to facilitate a helicopter landing.

The mission of this expedition was to challenge women physically, intellectually and emotionally, and to inspire young women to follow their dreams.

Team members also taught classes to middle and high

school students via the Internet.

NASA personnel flew to the North Pole and set up a satellite dish. There was just a four-hour window because of the tilt of the earth, Finlayson said.

Because the project was to provide role models for middle school girls to gain more self-confidence in pursuing math and science careers, Finlayson arranged to talk to students at Power Middle School in Farmington Hills. She's a former graduate, now a resident of Potosky.

Arrangements were made by Theresa Schlatter, a media specialist and Lorna Buffa, a science teacher, said Donald Hammond, Power Middle School principal. "They called via satellite," he said. "It was inspiring. Kids gathered around the speaker phone."

Hammond believes real life examples and applications are important. "You can't get more real than that," he said.

Finlayson, 27, graduated from Farmington High School and lived in Farmington until she went to the University of Michigan.

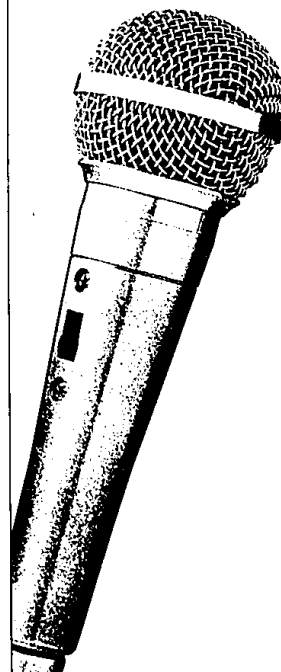
She teaches anthropology and sociology at the North Central Michigan College in Potosky and holds degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of Illinois.

Her research includes group dynamics and the evolution of culture. Her cold weather experience extends to mountain climbing in the Chilean Andes and the North American Rockies.

Finlayson also enjoys yoga and boxing.

For more information, contact Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan at (248) 473-1400.

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BUSINESS NEWS

Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, based in Farmington Hills, reports that the fourth-annual Picnic in the Park event, held June 24 at Comerica Park, raised more than \$80,000 to support the group's ten local clubs.

Hosted by the Detroit Tigers Women's Association, the event was presented by Amerisure Insurance, recently named one

of the "101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For" in Metropolitan Detroit, and DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund.

Funds raised at Picnic in the Park will benefit 17,000 local youth, through B&GCSM's programs.

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