

FRIDAY

August 31, 1990

ORANGE: Residents warned about recycling plant. Page 4.

DEERFIELD: Housing project denied sewer hookup. Page 2.

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WEATHER



This afternoon, sunny, warm, dry, high 80 to 85. Tonight, clear, cool, low in 50s. Saturday, sunny, warm, in mid-80s. Details, Page 15.

Corey Bykowski, Hillcrest School

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Selectmen drop their opposition to mural

By MICHAEL TERAULT
Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — Work on a controversial downtown mural is slated to begin Saturday, following the selectmen's decision Thursday to allow erection of necessary scaffolding.

The selectmen — some of whom had felt the private mural was inappropriate for Main Street — had held up the project this month by denying a scaffold permit. They signed the permit Thursday.

Selectmen's Chairman John

Merrigan said this morning he knows of nothing now or in the future that the board could do to stop the mural.

Merrigan said the selectmen don't necessarily approve of the mural but don't plan to stand in the way any longer.

They had earlier considered blocking the mural by asking the town attorney if it could be legally considered a sign. If so, town zoning would prohibit the mural unless the town Zoning Board of Appeals granted a special permit.

Today, Merrigan said the sign question was a "non issue."

Zoning board members have already said they are not inclined at present to view the mural as a sign, suggesting that there might not be any point in sending the mural proponents to their board for a special permit.

The project had been delayed over that technical issue.

Rebekka Tippens of the Institute for Cultural Understanding, the Colrain sponsor of the mural project, said Thursday night that the mural

should finally be getting off the ground this weekend.

If all goes according to plan, the scaffolding will be erected today along the east wall of the Borofsky Block near the Veterans Memorial Mall. Volunteers and the visiting Soviets from Greenfield's "sister region" of Poltava should be starting work on the mural this Labor Day Weekend, Tippens said. The cleaning and priming of the wall should be done Saturday. The chalking in of the mural design should begin Sunday or Monday.

Tippens hopes that the actual painting can begin next week.

Tippens consulted Thursday with the artist hired to do the mural, Janet Braun-Reinatz of Brooklyn, N.Y., on how and when to proceed.

"She said that if we don't start Saturday, we'll run into problems with the completion," Tippens said. Tippens said the project will have to be finished in about three weeks, or the cooler weather will interfere with the painting.

Meanwhile, a delegation of 25 Soviet young people, ages 16 to 22, is

scheduled to arrive Saturday, Tippens said. They will be staying with host families in the area through Tuesday. During that time, some of them will be taking turns working on the mural when they are not engaging in other planned activities during their stay here, Tippens said.

After Tuesday, the Soviet visitors will be taken to Cape Cod for a few days. They will go on a whale watch, have a barbecue on the beach, visit

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Mural

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Boston and even go to a college mixer

They will return to the county next weekend and stay until Sept. 17 or 18. After that, it's off to Washington, D.C., New York and then back to the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet guests are working on the mural, people from the community are invited to paint alongside them. Braun-Reinitz, who created the design for the mural, will be overseeing the project with some helpers. A group of art students from Greenfield Community College is also slated to spend time working on the mural, Tippens said.

Tippens said that the people from two different cultures working side by side on the mural will eventually form a bond.

The process of working together on a common project should gradually accomplish that goal, Tippens said. The sharing of brushes, asking questions, mixing paints together should lead to conversations between the painters, Tippens said.

"They'll get over the awkwardness that can happen when you have a meeting of cultures," Tippens said.

As the mural is being painted, local storytellers and folk musicians plan to drop by and perform at the work site, Tippens said.

The mural overlooking the Veterans Memorial Mall is intended to be a celebration and commemoration of Greenfield's history. The mural will depict historic buildings and scenes from Greenfield's past, such as Poet Seat Tower and the Eunice Williams covered bridge, as well as images that represent elements of the town's heritage, such as the fog nozzles that are still being manufactured in Greenfield.

Even though the project is beginning, it is not too late to offer comments and suggest changes, Tippens said.

"A work of art is a living creation, that as it's painted, you can still say, 'Wait a minute. How about...?'" Tippens said.

The artist has agreed to tone down some of the bright colors in the mural, in response to repeated criticisms from the community, Tippens said.

A "color-coordinating committee" consisting of local residents concerned about the color scheme has been set up to work with the artist, Tippens said. Historical Commission Chairman Peter S. Miller and Soldiers Memorial Trustee Richard Kinner are on the committee.

Tippens said she is relieved that the project is getting started after

delays had jeopardized it.

She also was pleased with Wednesday night's public forum on the mural, at which people for and against the mural sounded off.

"I felt really glad how the forum was happening. I felt like there was some kind of spirit of reconciliation toward the end," Tippens said. At the forum, several people observed that since the mural was going to be painted on private property, there was no real avenue for stopping the mural. So since the mural was going to happen, they said it would be better to take a positive approach and work with the proponents to make sure the mural is something that would be palatable to all.

"There's a part of me that feels bad it had to get to a confrontational level," Tippens said. She hoped that opponents of the mural would stop by and discuss their differences so that they could "mend fences."

Tippens expressed the hope that the mural could be a project in which the whole community could take pride.

Selectmen John Merrigan, Peter Ruggeri and June Burniske signed the scaffold permit, although "that doesn't mean the board's other two members wouldn't have" said Merrigan. He said only three names were needed.