

Farmingington Observer

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Twenty-Five Cents



Let's Do The Mash Potato

Laurie Cook (left), Denise Younger and Marla Edgar could slip by their own mothers without being recognized. To find out why they donned the potato head costumes, turn to Page 3A.

Rejuvenation sought in development plan

The current downtown Farmington redevelopment plan is alive and changing as it greets its first birthday, according to City Manager Robert Deadman.

Tuesday evening, the Farmington City Council will consider establishing a Downtown Development Authority and implementing another step in the landscaping plan, according to Deadman.

The suggestions offered through the market survey conducted by Howard L. Green and Associates last year are being used as the basis for the continuing redevelopment of the downtown business district.

The architectural plan, which included suggestions for uniform signs, awnings and pedestrian walkways is being kept in mind but will develop slowly, said Deadman, who is optimistic

about the changes that have taken place.

"I think that downtown Farmington is coming alive," he said.

One of the most visible proofs that the downtown business district is alive is the Saturday morning traffic jam, according to Deadman.

"WHEN PEOPLE TELL ME THAT they were in a traffic jam in downtown Farmington, I like that. A few years ago that wouldn't have occurred," he said.

"You'd like to get traffic flowing smoothly but you can have it so smooth that it goes past your business district."

"If the idea is to get to Novi, you take I-96. If you want to shop in downtown Farmington, you take Grand River."

Those traffic jams were unknown to the business district in the '30s, according to Deadman.

Because the redevelopment plan has been carried out slowly, Deadman believes that many people haven't noticed the changes in the community within the last 20 years.

"They're gradual and subtle changes," he said. "People don't realize it's happening."

"We have uniform sign requirements now which call for the upgrading of signs when the tenants and the signs change. They have to keep up with current standards."

The improvements become noticeable when today's conditions are compared to those of the '30s.

"WHEN YOU THINK OF beautiful downtown Farmington in the '30s it wasn't so pretty. There were a lot of dilapidated, unsightly buildings. It wasn't clean," Deadman said.

"There was industry in the downtown area, instead of commercial establishments."

Things looked bleak until the Downtown Farmington Center's developers decided to invest in the area, according to the city manager.

"The salvation of the downtown area was the Downtown Center," he said.

"Without that we'd still be struggling. We wouldn't be better off than other areas where the downtown hasn't developed," he said.

"It proved that business though the area was viable enough to invest money in."

"Some years ago under another re-

development plan, we acquired additional parking on the north side of Grand River.

"And at the same time, we moved the Dairy Mart, which interfered with the ideal use of the lot in the Downtown Center. Under the same plan, we beautified the center by putting the mini-park in the parking lot."

"SINCE THEN THE COMMUNITY has seen the redevelopment of the Medallion Pool Building on Grand River into the Village Outlet.

The Corner Barbershop, down the street from the Outlet will be renovated this spring.

The Outlet brought into Farmington more apparel shops. Green and Associates recommended that the business district try to attract more clothing stores.

The pedestrian walkway is still on the drawing boards.

"To have a pedestrian walkway you have to have something for pedestrians to look at," he said.

"Let's get our major walkways looking good first, an said."

"Farmingington is a viable place. The vacancy factor has proved this to us true. There are no vacant buildings in the downtown area," Deadman said.

The redevelopment of the area needs cooperation between business and government, according to Deadman.

"WE CAN RESPOND TO the needs of the retailers and the building owners. The city can provide the mechanics for the renovation. We can provide services. But we can't run the businesses."

"We can deal with traffic problems. We can offer police protection. We can keep the area clean."

"We can advise the building owners what sort of tenants to have. We can tell them that the area needs more customers. But we can't rent out the buildings for them," he said.

"No way do I see government as the bad boy or as contributing to the problems of the downtown area."

But for government to help the businessmen, it needs to know of their concerns, he said.

"We've received very little input from the business community and that's been historically true here."

"We need to know what the retailers feel their problems are. There are a lot of things that we can do to help, but we aren't retailers," he said.

Chamber fears Oakland coup

Name changes are often initiated for cosmetic purposes, but the Farmington Chamber of Commerce members would like to know why the North Oakland Chamber of Commerce (NOCC) recently dropped "North" from its name.

"It gives them a tool to try and take in everybody," said Ed Lane, Farmington Chamber of Commerce executive director, although the NOCC apparently denies any intentions of moving in on other territory.

The NOCC is made up of Pontiac and several other smaller communities, who adopted their name in 1970. The move to become the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce was decided at a membership meeting Feb. 16.

"We think the only time we should get together is on key issues like transportation," Lane said, explaining that

Farmingington has no intention of joining the Oakland County Chamber.

"Every town would lose its identity," he said. "I just don't think it would work."

Lane believes he speaks for many of the 20 other independent chambers in Oakland County who resent the name change.

"We all meet several times throughout the year, but they went along with this change before we discussed it."

THE OAKLAND COUNTY Chamber of Commerce is headed by executive director Earl Kreps, who has a staff of three, Lane said.

"I don't see how they could handle everything," Lane said, commenting on the manpower situation.

Lane believes in independent chambers, so much so that the Farmington Chamber of Commerce recently

turned down a Northville request to be admitted to the group.

"Northville wanted to join our group, but we explained we couldn't really do the job for them. Each community has its own way of doing things."

Lane plans to meet with Kreps to uncover the rationale behind the name change.

Oakland Chamber of Commerce spokesmen deny any intent to move in on the territories of other chambers. "We feel strongly that a united county-wide business effort has to be established to accomplish more meaningful results at a county and state level," Kreps wrote to the Farmington Chamber.

Kreps' letter stresses the impor-

tance of local strength and identity. He requests a joint meeting of chamber officers to discuss the change.

He also apologized for not informing local chambers of the name change before notice to the general membership of the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce.

James Zeda, Jr., executive director of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce, and Eileen Turner, executive director of the Troy Chamber of Commerce, both oppose adoption of the name change and forwarded letters to Lane explaining their opposition.

"I don't know what we can do, but basically we don't like the idea," said Phyllis Crump, executive secretary of the Greater Rochester Chamber. "It sounds like they're representing the whole area," she said, terming the name change "misrepresentation."

Board eyes budget in study session

By LYNN ORR

Money and millage will be the topics of discussion at an open study session of the Farmington Board of Education scheduled for 8 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 24 at North Farmington High School.

The preliminary 1977-78 school year budget includes about \$2 million in revenues Farmington residents are expected to approve in the millage election April 5. Residents are being asked to renew four mills.

"We anticipate the renewal passage," Supt. Lewis Schulman said. "Its defeat would cut into the heart of Farmington's educational program."

"We had a good school year and would like to continue to operate without abandoning any programs or reducing the quality of our instruction," he added.

Farmingington voters have never defeated a renewal millage.

Next year's expenditures are expected to exceed the \$24 1/2 million budget of the 1976-77 school year, Schulman said.

"It's apparent that this budget would require additional millage," he added.

THE STUDY SESSION allows the board to get a rough idea of next

year's expenditures and revenues, Schulman explained.

"We are preparing an account of revenues and expenditures plus an analysis of programs in additional millage terms," he said. "We're trying to get a price tag on a good sound educational program."

New programs up for discussion include a K-12 gifted program, a computer math program at Farmington Senior High, a long-range girls' sports program, and consideration of improvement of the pupil-teacher ratio, he said.

Another administrative priority is maintenance of buildings and equipment.

"We'd like to play catch-up in terms of replacing typewriters, sewing machines, and other equipment," Schulman explained. "And with the high costs of fuel, we have to upgrade the maintenance and repair of our buildings. When there's a money crunch, they usually take it out of that (building and maintenance) account."

An example of the kind of maintenance he'd like to continue was the result of a recent surprise bus inspection. "All of the first 32 buses checked passed inspection," he said, adding that the inspection is ongoing but hasn't yet produced a failure.



Manager Gregg Wilson is at home behind the raw fish bar at the Clamdiggers Restaurant, Farmington. To find out how he manages to serve a cozy dinner for 200, turn to Page 3A.

State may nix Northwestern plan

By LINDA TAYLOR

John P. Woodford, director of the State Highway Department, will recommend Wednesday that the State Highway Commission cancel any plans to build the proposed Northwestern Highway extension.

Woodford will appear before the highway commission Wednesday when it meets at 10 a.m. to tackle the Northwestern question.

"I'm recommending it be removed from the construction plans because, with M-275 cancelled, it has no place to go," said Woodford. "My people studied connecting it with M-59 and found that not logical."

Northwestern Highway now ends at Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield Township.

The proposed Northwestern extension

was designed to link up with M-275. But a decision was made last month to cancel M-275 from I-96 in Novi to I-75 in Springfield Township.

The result was that the Northwestern extension, if approved, would descend into a black spruce bog.

While West Bloomfield Twp. Supervisor John Doherty, a Northwestern proponent, expressed shock at the decision to recommend the route's cancellation, environmentalist George Snyder of the Eastern Michigan Environmental Action Council (EM-EAC) said he was "pleased as punch."

Snyder is a representative to the Citizens Advisory Committee, one of two groups which has been completing preparatory for an environmental impact study design for the proposed Northwestern route.

Since Northwestern was in limbo

after M-275's death last month, CAC and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) cancelled February meetings.

DOHERTY CALLED Woodford's decision to recommend cancellation of the extension "like pulling the foundation out when you're ready to put the roof on."

He said if the state highway commission follows Woodford's recommendation, it would render a "wrong beyond belief" to residents of West Bloomfield Township.

Doherty has long insisted that Northwestern was a matter of "when," not "if."

ronmentalists from Franklin, Southfield, Farmington and West Bloomfield, as well as neighboring interested communities, rejoiced at what may lead to success after years of fighting.

The proposed 9.3 mile extension has pitted environmentalists against developers and the county road commission.

The concept of extending Northwestern has been on highway department books since 1923. The road commission had attempted to sue the state to force construction of the extension.

Persons from both sides of the issue said Friday they intend to travel to Lansing Wednesday to hear the outcome of the highway commission's session.

Kenn Loomis dies; former city mayor

Kenneth R. Loomis, 74, a past City of Farmington mayor died Feb. 12 in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., where he moved in 1972, after having lived in Farmington since 1924.

He was founder of the Loomis Insurance Co. in 1937 and was elected mayor in 1951 when the city residents also voted to implement a new city charter which called for a city manager form of government.

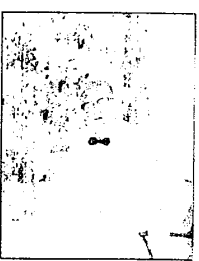
Loomis received the highest vote total in that election. He also served for a short time as acting city manager in the waning days of 1951 and until January of 1952 when the city's first city manager, Angus Leitch was forced to resign because of ill health.

Loomis stepped down when James Tennant was hired as the city's full-time city manager.

In 1960, he began the Loomis Realty Co. He sold his business to the current owner, Cecil Roberts, a nephew, in 1972.

LOOMIS WAS AN ACTIVE member of the Farmington community, serving as a master of the Farmington Masonic Lodge, where he was a life member.

He joined the Farmington Kiwanis in 1945 and the Farmington Exchange Club in 1961. He also was a member of the Farmington Elks Club.



KENNETH R. LOOMIS

Lost Lake Woods Club and the Farmington Hunt and Fish Club.

He also served as a city councilman and was a member of the Oakland County Board of Supervisors.

Loomis is survived by his wife, Lulu, who he married in 1928. He also is survived by a brother, John, of Ontario, Canada.

Services were conducted in Florida.

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Chamber teaches students
Farmington Chamber of Commerce is spreading the business ethics to the new generation through the school system. To see what it is doing, turn to Page 2A.