

# Farmington Observer

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## McCannell resigns commission seat

By MARY GNIEWEK

Robert McCannell of Farmington Hills has resigned from his post as Oakland County Commissioner for the 25th District.

Citing business and personal reasons for his departure, McCannell, 50, a Republican, turned in a letter of resignation to commission chairman Wallace Gabler last Thursday.

"This doesn't happen very often," Gabler said. "I can recall only one other instance. Bob McCannell was an excellent commissioner and a good friend. I respect his good judgement."

At a special meeting held last week, the commission set Oct. 5 as the date for a special primary election to fill the seat vacated by McCannell's resignation. Filing deadline is 4 p.m. Sept. 4. Petitions should be filed at the county election office, 1200 N. Telegraph in Pontiac.

A general election will be held Tuesday, Nov. 6.

The 25th District includes parts of Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Commerce Township.

McCannell, a former mayor and city councilman in Farmington Hills, is a manufacturer's representative and

deals with the automobile industry. He cited the problems of Chrysler Corp. and the downswing in the auto industry as part of the reason for leaving his county post.

"The job is taking a lot of extra time," said McCannell in a telephone interview last Monday. "I do a lot of traveling."

"Also, I have a 16-year-old son and I'd like to spend a little more time with him."

McCannell had served nearly one and a half terms on the 27-member commission. Commissioners are paid an annual salary of \$11,925.

He was first elected in November, 1976, when he defeated Democratic opponent John Jack of Milford. In November, 1978, McCannell beat out Democratic challenger Robert Montgomery to secure his second two-year term in county government.

"I'VE ACCOMPLISHED some of the goals I set out to do," McCannell said. "The M-275 highway proposal is under reconsideration. It took two and one half years of work."

That plan deals with a highway system routed through several Oakland County communities, including Farm-

ington Hills and West Bloomfield.

After his first election to the commission, McCannell said he was reluctant to leave the local political scene. He had served as Farmington Hills mayor, city councilman, charter commission chairman and township supervisor.

Asked if he would serve in some capacity at the local government level again, he said: "If the opportunity to serve is there."

There are currently 15 Republicans and 11 Democrats serving on the Oakland County board of commissioners.



Robert McCannell: "I have a 16-year-old son and I'd like to spend a little more time with him."

## Middle school schedules set

Elimination of study halls, enrichment courses, and flexible schedules geared to student needs top the changes that sixth, seventh and eighth grade students will experience when the Farmington School District adopts a middle school program in 1980.

Middle schools were chosen by educators as a way to deal with declining enrollment in the district. The system will move sixth graders out of elementary schools and put them in with seventh and eighth grade students.

Ninth grade students will attend senior high schools. The new system will begin in the 1980-81 school year.

The Farmington Board of Education unanimously approved the middle school curriculum Tuesday night — one week after it heard reports from a committee of educators who designed the program.

Lynn Nutter, assistant superintendent of instruction, called the curriculum "the best of all worlds. It is an ideal program not found in any single middle school, but a combination for the best of many."

"Farmington will be known across the country as a leader in this field once the program is implemented," she said.

In addition, reading will be taught as a separate subject in sixth grade. One year of physical education will be required in sixth grade, and another year in either seventh or eighth grade.

"I think the recommendations of the task force are excellent," said board secretary Helen Prutow. "It gives the children one teacher they can identify with. Now, they are seeing a different teacher every period."

"I think this lack of familiarity causes some of the problems in junior high now."

Sixth and seventh graders will have 10 weeks each of art, home economics, vocal music and industrial arts.

Enrichment classes could include poetry, weaving, calligraphy and computers in addition to math, science and reading labs. Those courses would depend on student interest and staff ability to teach such courses.

The middle school committee feels a seven-hour day will allow more versatile exposure for students. Sixth and seventh graders will be able to choose one elective period; eighth graders will choose three.

Seventh and eighth grade students will be mixed together in some classes. Sixth graders will have all their academic courses in the morning, when attention spans are greatest.

Teachers, counselors and parents will be involved with some of the scheduling.

UNDER THE NEW curriculum, students will spend a seven-hour day in the classroom. Basic requirements for all grades include math, science, social studies and language arts.

## From jungles to suburbs: Refugee family seeks new life

By MARY GNIEWEK

Thanh, 7, and her younger brother, Dung Hoang, 5, like to play with building blocks, watch TV, ride bicycles and scoot down the giant slide at Belle Isle.

They're hams for anyone who wants to take their pictures. And they love to talk to their grandparents on the telephone.

But the Hoang children didn't grow up with Sesame Street or push-button telephones. They are the children of a former South Vietnamese marine corporal, who spent three years hiding in the jungles of Vietnam from Communists who had overrun his homeland.

At birth, the children were given their mother's maiden name to escape the stigma of their father's past. Their father spent time in a North Vietnamese jail because he had fought for the losing side.

The family came to Farmington Hills July 31 following 10 months in a Malaysian refugee camp. The mother and children escaped from Vietnam on a relative's fishing boat. The father left on another vessel. They met in Malaysia last October. If either attempt had failed, it would have meant death for the family members.

"The children are so untouched by this experience," said Mrs. Vera Mingo, who is temporarily housing the family in her home near Eleven Mile and Middlebelt.

"They are outgoing, friendly, smart and well-behaved," she said.

THE VIETNAMESE refugees' trip was sponsored by Mrs. Mingo's church, Shepherd King Lutheran of West Bloomfield. The congregation decided to sponsor a refugee family after watching a film about their plight last fall.

"We are encouraged to withdraw our support once they are back on their feet," Mrs. Mingo said. "They are hard-working and motivated people."

The family is slowly beginning to build a foundation for a lifestyle that has been transient and uncertain. The father, Nguyen Van Thanh, 30, started a job this week at Mid-State Aluminum in Farmington Hills.

His wife, Hoang Thi Thung, 26, spends her days taking care of their children. The youngest, Hoang, is just seven weeks old.

In the evenings, the couple cooks, wash clothes and attend English classes at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Berkley. They've met other Vietnamese refugees through the Buddhist Temple in Detroit.

"They were luckier than many," Mrs. Mingo said. "Even at the camp, they had food, water and medical attention — more than was available at other camps."

Even so, their food consumption in the camp equaled about one third their normal intake. When the baby was taken to a doctor last week for treatment of a virus, she weighed just over seven pounds.

THE FAMILY comes from a small village near the resort town of Vung Tau. Thanh worked as a fisherman until he joined the South Vietnamese Marines in 1968. He served as a truck driver and mechanic until 1975.

"After South Vietnam fell, there was a terrible stigma attached to being in the South Vietnamese Army," Mrs. Mingo said.

Thanh's wife, Thung, who speaks almost no English, listened nearby.

"There was no hope for their future. They were considered enemies. Thanh's

(Continued on page 4A)



Hoang Thi Thung holds her seven-week-old daughter Huong.

## Hills hopeful to face voters

The Farmington Democratic Club is sponsoring a candidates' night for the Farmington Hills City Council primary election beginning at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 29, in the conference room of the Farmington Community Library's 12 Mile Road branch.

All 10 candidates for the City Council positions have been invited to participate. Each candidate will be given three minutes for an opening statement to be followed by questions from the audience and the Democratic Club.

Each candidate will have an opportunity to respond to each question asked of any other candidate.

- What city programs would you cut if faced with a reduction in revenues?
- What do you see as the most crucial problems facing the city of Farmington Hills?

All candidates have been asked to bring campaign literature for distribution at the meeting. The library is located at 32737 12 Mile Road between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads.

OTHER CAMPAIGN notes: Farmington Hills City Council members Joanne Smith and Jan Dolan are continuing their campaigns for re-election with a series of coffees and other public appearances.

The next coffee is scheduled for 8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 28, at the home of Pat and Patty Prendergast, 28277 Herndonwood in the Forestbrook subdivision, west of Inkster and south of 12 Mile roads. On Friday, Sept. 7 at 8 p.m., a wine-and-cheese fund-raiser will be held for the two candidates in the clubhouse of the Hunter's Ridge apartment complex on 14 Mile Road west of Orchard Lake.

The candidates' night is open to the public and anyone may ask questions. The candidates' night probably will be the only one held before the Sept. 11 primary.

The questions, prepared by the Democratic Club, have been forwarded to the candidates. They are:

- Do you favor the proposed senior citizen housing program? If yes, why? If no, what is your alternative plan to meet senior citizen housing needs?



Thanh, 7, and Dung, 5, have made a smooth transition from a refugee camp to a Farmington Hills home. (Staff photos by Randy Borst)

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