

# Farmington Observer

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## School negotiations go until early morning

By STEVE BARNABY

Bargaining between the Farmington Education Association (FEA) and the school board lasted until the early morning hours Tuesday. Teachers were scheduled to meet at 6:30 a.m. to hear from their union leadership on negotiation progress.

Teachers were scheduled to report for work today. Students in elementary classes are scheduled for half-day sessions tomorrow. Thursday, all classes are slated to resume.

But these class schedules could be disrupted if a tentative agreement isn't reached. For an immediate update, parents should call the school board office, 477-1300.

Union members have vowed to stay out if a contract isn't settled. At a general membership meeting last Wednesday night at Oakland Community College, about 300 of the FEA's members overwhelmingly voted not to go back to work if there wasn't a settlement.

Negotiations seemed to be going to the satisfaction of both sides until late

last week when the rhetoric and positions hardened.

"I think they're stalling to see what other Oakland County districts are going to settle on," said FEA President Tom Chryznowski.

Salary, fringe benefits, class size and working conditions were issues of contention left on the table, according to sources from both sides.

But the main issue was how percentage increases were to be computed.

The union request of a 6 percent salary increase was based on second se-

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Faculty members at Oakland Community College's four campuses had better luck this weekend. Their union, the OCC Faculty Association, reached an agreement with the board. By a vote of 161-43, the contract was approved.

The school's chief negotiator, Bob Coleman, has been somewhat more optimistic over settlement chances.

"We've made lots of progress," he said. "In the last couple of days we've

settled nine non-economic issues. I don't know if we're going to have a contract, but we're sure going to try," he said.

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## Super farm Giant crops yielded

By MARY GNIEWEK

Corn stalks 16 feet tall and 60-pound squash conjure visions of blue ribbon prize agricultural displays at the Michigan State Fair.

But there are simply the backdrop for Herman Meinke's backyard greenhouse in Farmington Hills — planted for experimentation, not for exhibition.

know it's there. Plants pick up on energy naturally."

The walls of the greenhouse are made of hard plastic, which allows ultra-violet rays to pass through it.

"What we have here is a balanced spectrum of energy."

Meinke claims the energy field surrounding his greenhouse extends 13 feet beyond it.

"This is the tropical part," he said, pointing around the enclosure that is home to a pair of frogs, some toads, and a garter snake.

The floor of the greenhouse is a three-foot deep, 800 gallon pond stocked with bluegill, catfish, minnows and crayfish.

The outer layer will grow hardier plants," he said.

The two-year-old greenhouse was built to replace a geodesic dome that flopped.

"It just fell apart," Meinke said.

Meinke's experiments deal with planting and transplanting in different environments. Papaya trees inside the greenhouse are thriving while the ones outside are shriveled.

In another experiment, Meinke transplanted already ripened green peppers from the backyard to the greenhouse. To date, there hasn't been much change.

"I want to make a place where the average guy can plant in his backyard," Meinke said. "Greenhouses can be built extremely cheap."

"I think in the future, people are going to have to grow their own food. Not all of it, but most of it. The idea is to find the cheapest energy source possible."

"I don't spray anything here, either," Meinke added, pointing to rows of herbs, flowers and vegetables that fill his yard in jumbled fashion.

"All sprays are somewhat toxic. I don't use any fertilizers."



One of Herman Meinke's pride and joys is his crop of 16-foot high corn stalks. The Oakland Community College research chemist has experimented with many growing theories resulting in unusually large crops. (Staff photo by Randy Borski)

## Confrontation steps closer over zone rift

A group opposing the senior citizen income housing project at Freedom and Drake roads have come one step closer in attempts to quash the project.

Julicann Hovanessian, of the Citizens for More Responsible Government (CMRG), submitted the necessary petitions at the city clerk's office last week.

These petitions officially notify city officials that her group will attempt to gain 3,000 signatures to call for a referendum election to repeal a rezoning ordinance passed by council on August 13.

That ordinance allows multiple family units to be built on that site.

Although requiring only 300 signatures for the notification petitions, Mrs. Hovanessian's group was able to obtain 500 signatures, according to officials at the city clerk's office.

CMRG rounded out its petition drive last Tuesday with a meeting in the Twelve Mile library where 300 persons attended.

But the group's petition drive, which has to be accomplished within 45 days of ordinance passage, could be all for naught, according to the city's legal department.

Attorney Paul Bibeau and City Clerk Floyd Cairns believe such an election wouldn't be allowed.

"It is the opinion of our city attorney and the opinion of the attorney general that under the home rule act, they (CMRG) can't referend a change of zoning," says Cairns.

But CMRG supporters disagree.

At last week's library meeting attorney William Lange, a candidate for

city council, said that a referendum effort on zoning is legally sound. A team of CMRG lawyers, he said, have thoroughly researched the question.

The group has vowed to take the matter to court if the referendum petitions are refused.

The housing plans include 264 apartment units to be built on sites within the city. At Freedom and Drake, 114 units of one and two story apartments would include 50 senior citizens, 54 low to moderate income family and 10 units for handicapped persons.

Some 150 units of senior housing will be built on another site in the northern part of Farmington Hills. The primary site for these units is the Bond School, now closed, at Thirteen and Orchard Lake.

Although planned to be a privately owned development, it will be funded by bonds sold through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Rents would be subsidized through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The private firm is Multi-Rise which owns several other senior housing projects in the Detroit suburban area.

The project would cost \$8.5 million.

CMRG has maintained that residents should have a vote on whether they want such a project in Farmington Hills.

"We don't question the wish of most of the citizens to have senior housing. But we do believe the community may not be so willing to have the federal dictate enforced that requires we also take along with it low and moderate family housing," said Mrs. Hovanessian.

## A Far East trek

### Teacher learns mystique of China

By MARY GNIEWEK

Imagine vacationing in a country populated by nearly one billion people. No one accepts a tip. No one pushes tourists. Advertising is non-existent. Hotel rooms don't have door locks, but no one steals a thing.

That was the kind of trip Robert and Jean Sudlow of Farmington Hills experienced last month in the People's Republic of China.

Mrs. Sudlow, a first grade teacher at Beechview Elementary School, clinched her long-sought dream vacation when she was one of 50 instructors who obtained a National Education Association (NEA) visa to China.

It allowed the Sudlows to join a group of 50 NEA travelers for two weeks of guided travel through Peking, Harbin, Changchun, Tientsin, and Canton.

"My husband and I travel a lot and I've wanted to go there for a long time," said Mrs. Sudlow, who once unsuccessfully tried to obtain a teaching position in China, via a Canadian ambassador.

The trip was part of the couple's second world wide tour. "The people were most interesting," said Mrs. Sudlow, still sorting through nine trays of picture slides of the month long excursion.

"In Manchuria, people don't see many Caucasians. They'd be mesmerized just to stare at us — from head to toe. On shopping trips, they'd mob us. Now I know how celebrities must feel."

said Chinese men and women wore white tops and dark colored slacks, used bicycles as their main source of transportation, and worked side by side at construction jobs and factory work.

"If a couple is married and has a child, they get 40 yuan (one is equal to two thirds of an American dollar) a year for support.

"If they have two children, they don't get any yuan. If they have three children or more, they lose part of their income is deducted per child."

Mrs. Sudlow did not see churches in China, except for historic temples and one Jewish synagogue in Harbin, which is near Korea. It was built by the Russians, she was told.

Grocery stores were stocked with cookies, canned goods and tea, but no meat. Outdoor vegetable stands flourished.

Though no products were advertised on billboards, "They would advertise pictures of people who had accomplished something, people who had made contributions to the country."

The tour group had two government-employed tour guides who stayed with them the entire trip. There was also one local guide in each city they visited.

"Peking was very scattered. There was no central business area. It was that way in every city. Despite seven million people in Peking, traffic was sparse. No one had cars. Everyone rode bicycles."

only cars the NEA group spotted passed by infrequently with small curtains pulled shut over the windows.

"Some of the houses we saw were very poor. In the country, the people have to depend on a well for water and everyone in the village uses the same outdoor.

"In the city, a family usually has two rooms and shares a kitchen with several other families," she said.

Mrs. Sudlow said the Chinese were friendly and curious. Many spoke English. She said the group enjoyed several candid talks with college students, exchanging information about the two countries.

"They don't think they are free enough in their country. But they think Americans are too free.

"When they graduate from school, the government places them in jobs where they are needed. There is no choice."

Regular school was recessed, but the group visited a school for the gifted, a nursery school and a kindergarten.

"The schools are very far behind. They have very few books. But the teachers try hard with whatever they have. They struggle." School is compulsory in China for seven years, from age six through the seventh grade.

under glass enclosures, but they could not be purchased. "I never saw an English newspaper there," Mrs. Sudlow said. The hotels were also a new cultural experience.

"In many of them, we did not have a key to our room. But nothing was ever taken. They were so honest. One woman left her camera case on a boat. It was returned to her two days later.

"I broke a zipper on a pair of slacks. I traveled very lightly and couldn't afford to carry around a pair of pants I couldn't wear. A woman repaired them for me and she wouldn't accept a cent.

"People are very quiet about crime," Mrs. Sudlow continued. "We spoke to some men in Peking and they told us there are quite a few murders and robberies. Punishment is very stern."

Is there any indication of class difference in China?

"Yes, I think so," Mrs. Sudlow said. "College professors, linguists, guides and translators are highly respected. They live in nice homes.

"Some people live in hovels and mud huts. I heard a guide refer to a group of people as 'just peasants.'"

"One student said he wanted to work in the United Nations in New York but knew he would never be able to achieve that goal because his parents weren't distinguished enough.

"The students were very frank," Mrs. Sudlow is already preparing lessons for the first grade class she will teach this fall in Farmington Hills.

"I like to include something about each continent. This year, we'll focus on China."



Jean Sudlow had many tales to tell about mainland China after returning to her suburban home. (Staff photo)

WITHOUT MUCH diversion, she

TAXIS AND DOUBLE decker buses were used to transport people, but the

THE NEA GROUP did not see a single library, though the Chinese teachers claimed there were many. Newspapers were plastered on building walls

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CANDIDATES' TALK

Candidates for the Farmington Hills City Council have answered questions submitted by the League of Women Voters. To read what they have to say, turn to page 4A.