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Byrnes quits over internal conflict

By MARY GNIEWEK

Police officers' lack of cooperation in an internal investigation prompted the resignation of Farmington Public Safety Director Dan Byrnes last week. Byrnes' attempts to get to the bottom of a fight between off-duty police and three civilians were hampered by officers involved in the incident, he told the Observer Wednesday.

Byrnes was not told of the incident, which occurred at the home of Officer Chuck Lee on Sept. 15, until two days later by an outsider.

"What occurred that evening offended me. It upset me," Byrnes said. "I attempted to conduct an investigation but was not successful in proving or disproving the charges that were made."

According to sources, police officers

were drinking at the party and became incensed when the teenage party crashers appeared.

The chief termed his internal probe unsuccessful because he was unable to substantiate what really happened. He is leaving the department Oct. 12 and has no plans for future employment.

ACCORDING to Farmington Hills police reports, three police cars were called to Lee's residence on Dohoney in Farmington Hills to investigate a charge of "disorderly party in progress about 2 a.m."

At least seven Farmington police officers were at the party, a farewell bid to Officer Ray Lardie, who is moving out of state. The trouble began about midnight when three uninvited teenagers were asked to leave the party. A fight ensued between some of the

officers and one youth, according to witnesses. The teens left but returned about two hours later with a larger group armed with baseball bats, chains, and metal table legs.

No arrests were made. Lee did not file a complaint against the intruders. Neither have the intruders filed a complaint. According to Lee, the youths disbanded when half of them recognized him as a police officer.

BYRNES WAS AT the party but left before either incident occurred. He was distraught because none of the officers present, including Lt. John Santomaro, informed him of the incident.

Officer Lee said he did not think the altercation merited an immediate report to the chief. He further stated he told Byrnes all he knew about the incident.

"I felt no need to contact him in reference to the matter. It was 3 or 4 a.m. when it was over. Supervisors were there and felt the same way," Lee said. Lee claimed Byrnes found out about the incident from an outside source before anyone from the department could tell him.

Although he didn't identify any officers, Lee said the teens were grabbed by the arms and escorted to the door by the police guests when it was discovered they were uninvited.

He said he noticed one officer and a youth arguing in his family room — away from the basement party — and saw punches thrown.

"We grabbed his legs and shoulders and took him out to the front lawn," Lee said. "More punches were thrown outside. By whom and how many, I don't know."

"I WAS BUSY arguing with the girl who was with these kids. My position, I couldn't be everywhere at once."

Lee said when the youths returned a second time, his wife called the Farmington Hills police.

"I can tell you this. Not one single police officer got out of his car. I saw a supervisor from Farmington Hills and went over and told him what happened," Lee said.

"The kids, 12 or 15 of them, got in their cars and left without an incident. I collected their weapons off the front lawn."

Santomaro, who was at the party when the first but not the second incident occurred, does not believe the fight is related to Byrnes' resignation. "I definitely don't believe the two incidents are correlated," said Santomaro.

He said the worst injury suffered by one of the teens was a swollen lip.

Santomaro has been designated to act as interim chief until a replacement is found for Byrnes.

CITY MANAGER Bob Deadman, who accepted Byrnes' resignation, said he knew of the party but did not think it was the reason for Byrnes' sudden departure.

He denied pressure from his office to squelch the investigation.

"I gave no direction. It's not my management style. If there's a problem let's get it resolved."

He also said the council was not involved in the investigation. "I wasn't happy with his resignation. We're losing a good man. But being chief of police in a community can be a lonely job."

Enrollment drop hits pocket book for the district

By MARY GNIEWEK

Fourth Friday enrollment counts in the Farmington schools confirm administrators' earlier predictions.

For the first time in its history, the district is "out of formula" and will not receive state money for general education purposes.

The unofficial tally, tentative until a final report is issued in two weeks, lists total enrollment at 12,272 — almost 1,000 students less than last year.

Part of the reason for the sharp decline: the district ferreted out its adult high school completion program (to Walled Lake, still an in-formula district) and Marillac Hall, a school for unwed mothers, to shed some of its financial burden.

Last year, Farmington received \$1,295,000 in state aid. State aid membership allowance is based on the number of students in the district and State Equalized Valuation (SEV), the rate of taxation based on property values, which continue to climb in the Farmington area.

As student population declines and

SEV goes up, the amount of state aid received by the district is lowered.

"The rich districts get less than the poor. As we get richer, we get less aid, then none," said Bill Prisk, school finance director.

FARMINGTON'S \$30 MILLION education budget is generated primarily by 35.88 mills levied for general operation and 3.8 mills for debt reduction.

"We're going to have a good year," Prisk said. "We have enough money to run the school district. We're not levying all the tax money we could, just as much as we need."

The state will still reimburse Farmington for categorical needs like vocational education administration and special education. Education added cost, special education, community school, transportation and the bi-lingual program.

Farmington won't get aid for declining enrollment loss, court placed children, or reading support, categories for which it previously received state reimbursement.



The newest addition to the Farmington shopping scene is the old Federal's building which has been broken into a number of stores. It stands on Grand River and Warner. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

Like a merry-go-round

Downtown sees business boom

By MARY GNIEWEK

One businessman compared it to a chess board with pieces continually moving around the squares.

He was describing the merry-go-round of retail establishments in downtown Farmington.

Three years ago, businessmen and landlords were concerned about downtown Farmington's future. That was before a \$7,000 community development grant revealed the city needed more clothiers and service organizations.

Today, business is at 100 percent occupancy in downtown Farmington, according to City Manager Robert Deadman.

An artist supply store owner who wanted to expand his business waited a 1½ years until a larger building became available for lease around the corner.

Another woman increased her selling space three-fold by moving her ethnic crafts store from the back to a front window shop in the Village Mall, a cornerstone of downtown specialty shops at Grand River and Farmington roads.

Across the street, a Farmington couple converted their gas station into a furniture store. They wanted to change businesses but stay in Farmington.

"All the moves have been like players on a chess board," observed Dave Klotz, whose Village Pipe Shoppe is in the basement of the Village Mall.

KLOTZ'S STORE HAS been so profitable in two years that he is opening a larger store in Birmingham. But he's going to keep his pipe and tobacco shop in Farmington.

"It was hard to be in the basement at first. But now people know where we are. We have a lot of regular customers."

Upstairs, Mary Cauley operates Boli-na Reef, which stocks bamboo birdcages from the Cameroons, handmade boxes from Mali and woven purses from Indonesia.

For a year, her store was tucked away in the back of the mall, but five weeks ago she snatched an available window front location.

"I like the people here. The customers are sophisticated, but not pretentious. I like that feeling," Mrs. Cauley said.

relocated around the corner at 3305 Grand River.

As soon as he moved out of the mall, Country Miniatures, a store that specializes in doll houses and furniture, moved into his old shop.

"Farmington is a delightful community," Mahlin said. "The location has been good to us. We've had a great response the past 1½ years."

"We could've moved to another community. I was ready to expand 1½ years ago. But we had first refusal on this portion of the building. As soon as it was open, we grabbed it."

IN THE SAME building, two young artists opened a store specializing in handcrafted jewelry.

"Farmington seemed like a good growth area. And the space was available," said Doug Bacon, who co-owns Allan-Kimball Ltd. with Lane Trubler.

Why downtown Farmington's small stores are drawing a sustaining clientele in the age of massive shopping malls is something its shopowners could only speculate over.

"In larger stores, people assume they won't get attention. Here, I can be friends with my customers," Mrs. Cauley said.

"People can come in with no idea of what to do with a wall in the house or for a gift. I can come up with ideas and keep the price down at the same time."

Federal's department store was an anchor of downtown shopping until the chain went bankrupt and the branch closed a year ago last July. To date, seven stores occupy part of the old Federal's building.

"We were fortunate to get T.J. Maxx (a discount clothing store)," said building co-owner John Clappison. "They're a tremendous draw and other stores wanted to be near them."

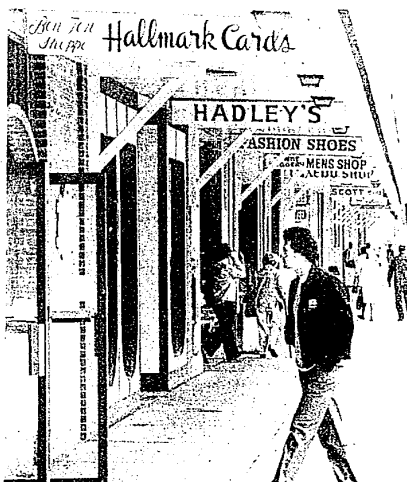
The other stores are Brands, Pier One Imports, Hit or Miss, The Branch, Payless Shoes and Jo-Ann Fabrics.

The other half of the 70,000-square-foot building will be ready for tenants when the parking lot on the east side of the structure is paved.

"WE WON'T SHOW it in its present condition. It's supposed to be paved this week," Clappison said.

He hopes to draw similar retail outlets.

"Any big outfit that's planning to move here usually keeps it a big secret until the leases are signed," said Ed Lane of the Farmington Chamber of Commerce.



The Downtown Farmington Center draws a full house of shoppers in the many shops lining the outdoor mall. (Staff photo)

Republicans vie for county seat

By MARY GNIEWEK

Three Republican candidates are gearing up for tomorrow's primary election that will pit the winner against Democratic challenger George Montgomery in the Nov. 6 election for the 25th district seat on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

The special election was called after Commissioner Robert McConnell of Farmington Hills resigned in the middle of his second two-year term in late August. His successor will serve through the end of 1980.

A light voter turnout is expected tomorrow, according to Oakland County elections division director Howard Altman.

Altman said about 400 requests for absentee ballots have been filed. The district includes north Farmington Hills, southwest West Bloomfield Township, all of Commerce Township,

and two precincts in White Lake Township.

Polls will be open tomorrow from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Residents of precincts 9, 11 and 22 will vote at North Farmington High, precinct 10 at O.E. Dunckel Junior High, and 19 at Forest Elementary.

Dr. G. William Caddell, a Commerce Township chiropractor, is making his first bid for public office in this race.

"I have a good feel for the people of the area. I hear their problems. I've been a resident 19 years. I know how they think," said Caddell, 44.

CADDELL IS A member of the Oakland County Republican Executive Committee, organization chairman for the 19th District Republican Committee, director of the Oakland County Republican Lincoln Club and has been a

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inside

GOOD INVESTMENT
Matt Freeman needed cash, fast, so he used the surest investment in town, the classified section of his hometown newspaper. One brief ad sold his used Monte Carlo in less than one day after the ad appeared. "It was great," he told us, "I found a buyer right away." Invest in a safe bet. Call our classified department today.

644-1070

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Future learning probed

Parents and educators have been faced with the question "Why can't Johnny read?"

Though Farmington students scored above the state average in fourth- and seventh-grade math and reading tests last spring, some people are still hard pressed to answer the question: "What's being taught in the classroom today?"

Next year, the Farmington school district will move into a new era. Junior high schools will be phased out. Sixth- through eighth-graders will be placed in middle schools. Ninth-graders will move to high schools.

It's time for evaluation of curricula, time for educators to make some decisions about what direction learning will take as a new decade begins.

Over the next few months, the Farmington Observer will examine education by getting into the classrooms, by talking to teachers, students and administrators.

We'll look at what's being taught in math, science, reading, history and other subjects from first to 12th grade. Maybe we can gain some insight into attitudes and morale. Our series will begin in the Monday, Oct. 8 edition with a look at science.