

# Farmington Observer

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## Mall spawns hard feelings and confusion

By Steve Barnaby  
editor

Farmington consumers could have yet another shopping mall at their disposal.

But a group of disgruntled merchants from the Downtown Farmington Center are less than enthused. They took their concerns to the Planning Commission Monday evening.

The commission has established a subcommittee to study the feasibility of rezoning an 8.5-acre parcel at the southeast corner of Farmington Road and Nine Mile from office to commercial use. It will report back on its recommendation to the full commission at next month's meeting.

The proposed shopping center is less than one mile from downtown Farmington, at Grand River and Farmington roads.

Downtown merchants fear another mall would draw away business, causing a hardship for the existing businesses already strapped by the tight economy and competition from several other area malls.

BUT MORE than customers are at stake. The anchor store for the proposed mall will be Farmer Jack. If zoning is approved by the city of Farmington, the Farmer Jack store on Farmington Road at State will move to the new site, according to Richard Walker, a representative of Waterford/Walker Developments, proponent of the new project.

While Walker maintained a new mall would be good for area business, merchants at the meeting took exception. "We've already got nine strip centers in a three-mile radius," said downtown merchant Mack Goldman.

"Once you kill the downtown, you kill a whole city. Our business is to build the city up, not down. If you want more businesses, bring them to downtown Farmington. They'll be more than welcome," he said.

But Walker disagreed, saying the proposed 100,000-square-foot shopping center would be what he termed a convenience center. The 400,000-square-foot Downtown Farmington Center is primarily a comparison center, he said.

Convenience centers are composed of stores, like supermarkets and drug

stores, for short-term shoppers. Comparison centers consist of shops handling such items as clothing and shoes, where consumers tend to spend more time.

Farmer Jack would take up 40,000 square feet in the new center, Perry Drug, 15,000 square feet, and ACO Hardware another 15,000 square feet. The rest of the space would be occupied by small businesses, such as a hairdressing shop, according to Walker.

ALTHOUGH THE DOWNTOWN district has remained nearly filled to capacity in the last few years, signs of the economy are beginning to show.

The TOEY store is closing its doors after two decades, to be replaced by a hardware. The office complex at the southwest corner of Farmington and Grand River roads has lost several tenants in the last year.

And the Village Mall on the opposite corner, has had its difficulties in keeping tenants.

The continued tenancy of Sanders, A&P and the Michigan Bell Phone Center also are in question.

The Cunningham Drugstore in the shopping center at Grand River and Mooney also will be closing soon.

Despite this trend, Walker said the Downtown Farmington Center was going through a transition which began in 1977 from a convenience to a comparison center.

This, he said, was typical of what was happening in other places.

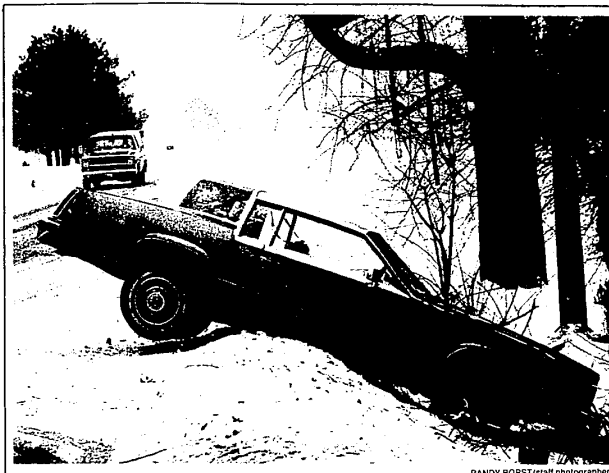
"CONVENIENCE CENTERS are moving to the periphery of downtown centers to avoid the traffic congestion.

"We consider ourselves part of the downtown area," he said.

He warned that if a shopping center wasn't built in the proposed site, a supermarket close to the downtown area would be lost altogether.

City Manager Bob Deadman noted that the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMATA) had its eye on the parcel to be used as a 24-hour bus maintenance yard.

But those plans have been tabled because SEMATA doesn't have the funds. If the transportation group did obtain the property, the tax base to the city would be lost.



### A familiar scene

Old Man Winter raised his nasty head in typical January fashion this week. Slippery roads and record cold temperatures led to school closings and caused accidents galore like the one above

on 14 Mile, west of Orchard Lake. To see more of the week's action revolving around the cold spell, turn to 3A.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

## Lange is mayor pro-tem

# Burwell takes municipal helm

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

A new mayor, mayor pro-tem and two council members were sworn in Monday night by Farmington Hills City Clerk Floyd Cairns.

Installed during the year's first City Council meeting were Jack Burwell

and William Lange, who were unanimously elected mayor and mayor pro-tem, respectively, by council.

Newly-elected council members Fred Hughes and Charles Williams took oaths of office as did re-elected council members Jan Dolan and JoAnn Soronen.

Outgoing mayor Donn Wolf delivered a State of the City address to a nearly full house.

IN REFLECTING on the work of City Council during the past year, Wolf noted several accomplishments including:

- Increased access to city government for citizens.
- \$25 million in additional tax base plus the potential for 1,400 new jobs as a result of research and industry attracted to Farmington Hills through

the Economic Development Corporation.

• HUD's approval of a construction proposal for 150 units of senior citizen housing in the city.

• The institution of a neighborhood watch program which has greatly reduced burglaries.

• The imminent signing of a cable TV contract.

• The construction of roads, sewers and water facilities.

• The exploration of new road-paving technology which saw more streets paved in the city in 1981 than ever before.

• The ½-mill roll back of taxes and the adoption of a 1981 budget identical to that of fiscal 1980, despite a 16-percent increase in the cost of living.

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Jack Burwell joined the ranks of the select few in Farmington Hills' short history by being elected mayor by his council colleagues.

**'But there are so many situations out there, particularly in the area of sexual abuse, going unreported that the apparent number of cases represents just the tip of the iceberg.'**

— Don Mussen

## Authorities wrestle with child abuse tragedy

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

Child abuse has become a national epidemic that is every bit as common in Farmington and Farmington Hills as it is in less affluent areas of the United States.

That's the position of Farmington School District Supt. Lewis Schulman, Richard Niemisto and Richard Murphy of the Farmington Hills Police Department of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

Don Mussen, protective services director for the Oakland County Department of Social Services, and Harold Rosenberg, a counselor with the Detroit Board of Education.

Numbers back them up. Between 250 and 300 cases of child abuse or neglect are reported monthly in Oakland County. Almost 50 arise from the southwestern area, which includes Farmington, Farmington Hills, Walled Lake, Union Lake, Milford, Highland, Novi, Northville, New Hudson and South Lyon.

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## Sewer construction will total \$94,000

Because the city underestimated the cost of a sanitary sewer by \$10,400, a public hearing has been set for 7:30 p.m. Monday at City Hall by the Farmington Hills City Council.

In accordance with the assessment procedures, any time the actual cost of a city project exceeds the originally estimated cost by 10 percent, a public hearing is held.

The involved sewer is on Hathaway Street from Grand River to I-96, in the Industrial Park area. The project will be financed by special assessment of involved businesses.

A large percentage of the cases reported in Oakland County, said Mussen, involve persons who are quite wealthy — corporate executives, physicians, lawyers, social workers and other professionals.

"But there are so many situations out there, particularly in the area of sexual abuse, going unreported that the apparent number of cases represents just the tip of the iceberg," he added.

"The growth of the problem is something to be very concerned about. In 1976, we were getting 80 cases reported monthly. The incidence has almost quadrupled since then," Mussen said.

NATIONALLY, MORE THAN ONE million persons were reported abused in 1981. Five thousand of them died. Because more children are reported abused in January than any other month, the Children's Village U.S.A. chose it as National Child-Abuse Prevention Month.

Toll-free information on child-abuse prevention is available by calling 1-800-423-5805.

"It's a horrifying, shocking problem when you really look at what it's all about," said Niemisto.

"It's not so much a problem that relates to socio-economic status as it is a psychological problem which cuts across all economic lines."

The most identifiable reasons for child abuse reflect increases in the stresses of family life and of social changes; divorce rates and the number of single-parent families; unemployment, and birth rates among teenagers.

IN 1975, THE MICHIGAN Legislature took action, and the Child Protection Law was enacted. It requires the reporting of child abuse and neglect by educational, medical and law enforcement personnel and provides for the protection of abused or neglected children.

The law also says that a person required to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect who fails to do so is civilly liable for damages caused by the failure.

Educators in the Farmington area are instructed on an ongoing basis about the provisions of the law and about the signs of child abuse or neglect.

"We're responding to state and national statistics on the incidence of child abuse," said Schulman, "but I

don't think our community would be much different than any other.

"In talking informally with those involved, this problem apparently is not limited to any particular stratum of society. This kind of abuse invades all of them."

Teachers are led to suspect abuse or neglect when a child has unexplained injuries, bruises or a limp; steals lunches, indicating possible malnutrition; dresses poorly or inadequately for the weather; is habitually late or absent from school; or demonstrates personal cleanliness problems.

EVEN THOUGH they're required to do so by law, physicians, teachers, principals and school psychologists sometimes are reluctant to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

According to Murphy of the Farmington Hills Police Department's Juvenile Division, officers have removed abused children from their homes and brought them in to be examined by a physician, only to be left sitting there for three or four hours.

"Doctors just don't want to go to court to testify," Murphy said.

Teachers have still other reasons. The confidentiality of reporting persons is supposed to be protected by law. But there are ways parents can find out who has reported them, Rosenberg said.

"There have been cases where a re-

porting teacher or administrator has been physically abused by parents of abused children," he added.

Other pressures were mentioned by two suburban elementary school teachers, neither of whom wish to be identified in this story.

The first became aware of a mental abuse case.

"It was kept under wraps for a long time at our school. You have to use discretion because the parents could stop you," she said.

"The Department of Social Services tries, but its hands are tied. The wheels of justice move very slowly."

The mother professes to love her child, and her other kids are fine, she added. She just picked on one child in the family.

The student, described by her teacher as a "very disturbed little girl who

thought she was wicked," eventually was removed from her home.

A SECOND TEACHER repeatedly has reported suspected child abuse to the school psychologist, only to see the information filed and seemingly forgotten.

"I've been told that unless I can prove it, nothing can be done," she said.

"That's near impossible unless you're in the home watching it happen. And kids are very protective of their parents. They'll tell you, 'No, nobody hit me.'"

Because it is such a serious accusation and because it is so easy for parents to cover their tracks, teachers and principals want to sweep it under the carpet, she added.

"It's much easier not to notice," she said, "but then you can't live with yourself."

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**DETROIT AUTO SHOW STARTS JAN. 16**

...see our special section in today's paper!