

# Farmington Observer

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## Buy Spicer site for city, say foes to plan for county park

By M.B. Dillon Ward staff writer

It's expected that scores of concerned residents and community leaders will try to convince city officials to buy a 11-acre park site at tonight's Farmington Hills City Council meeting. Their endorsements will support that of the Farmington Hills Planning Commission, which is recommending that the city independently acquire the Spicer property in order to retain local control.

The city's master storm drainage plan also will be outlined at the 7 p.m. legislative session at City Hall.

Lewis Schulman, superintendent of Farmington Schools, said either he or another school district representative will attend the meeting. He called the acquisition of the land west of Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile "a (potentially) very worthwhile addition to our outdoor educational program."

"Frankly, I hope the city does acquire the land. I'm very anxious and enthusiastic," said Schulman. "The property offers farm life, trees and a variety of terrain. It would enable us to add a marvelous new dimension to our outdoor educational possibilities."

Ponds and a small forest behind Fairview Early Childhood Center currently are the only local natural areas available for students to visit.

The school district would be prepared to contribute to a park program the portion of its budget allocated to the outdoor curriculum, Schulman added.

**LONG ACTIVE IN** youth hockey, Robert Coleman calls the Farmington area's recreational facilities "a real sad subject."

Since the Novi Ice Arena closed two years ago, local youngsters have been dependent on the good-heartedness of hockey program directors in Livonia, Southfield and Plymouth who've assimilated (for varying fees) about 400 Farmington area youngsters into their leagues. Participation has dwindled 50 percent due to the resulting inconvenience cost and transportation problems.

"I get very depressed talking about this," said Coleman, director of labor relations for the Farmington School District and vice president of the

Farmington Amateur Hockey Association.

Farmington and Farmington Hills are first-class areas to live in, with first-class schools. We should have first-class facilities. This idea of purchasing the property is important to people here now, and to children in future years long after we're gone," added Coleman, a veteran hockey coach who grows even more disheartened when visiting municipally-owned skating facilities in Livonia, Redford, Plymouth, Garden City, Westland, Wayne and Southfield.

**FARMINGTON SOCCER** Club president John Bailey said "Farmington Hills has very, very poor recreational facilities that are among the poorest anywhere."

"I think it's a shame. There are a lot of talented athletes and people interested in recreation, and they deserve a lot better facilities than they have. It's ridiculous."

Presently, the club's 600 athletes play on land owned by the school district at 12 Mile and Drake. The soccer organization must apply annually for a permit and pay the city for mowing. It has spent thousands of dollars to level terrain and put in parking lots.

"If we had a permanent site, we'd spend more money than we do. But the school district could sell that land before the next hour's up. We would real-

ly love the city to develop a park."

Rob Hackman, Little League Baseball commissioner, wants the city - not Oakland County - to buy the Spicer property. The Little League must share the city's limited number of baseball diamonds with high schools, independent softball teams and Parks and Rec leagues.

"I certainly wouldn't want the county in there. There should be a city park. We don't need another governmental agency trying to tell us what to do."

"We have enough trouble with our own city. I can't understand why they (city officials) haven't bought it yet. It's ridiculous. They haven't even gone to any groups to get opinions."

**LITTLE LEAGUE FOOTBALL** Athletic Director Fred Molner said he's "over the barrel with no place else to go."

"We pay for the use of the high-schools' facilities and have to schedule our games for Sundays. (High-school fields are used Saturdays for prep football games.)"

"With a city park, we could alternate with the soccer leagues and use the same playing fields," Molner said.

Because there is no municipal swimming pool, Michigan Sting Ray swimmers also must use high-school facilities - meaning that swimmers as young as 7 years old practice until 8:30 at night.

In the summer and during school vacations, Farmington area tankers must travel 30-40 minutes one way to Oak Park's outdoor pool for swim practice.

"It's really something that the towns of Farmington and Farmington Hills don't have more facilities. Southfield has a golf course, basketball court, swimming pool, softball area, picnic area, ice skating - it's just great for kids," said Elfriede Rudek, coordinator for the Sting Ray swimmers.

"The town is dilly-dallying around and letting the county take it (the Spicer property) over."

"If you want to keep kids out of trouble, you have to provide them with something to do. We should be spending our money before they get into trouble, not on rehabilitation after they've landed in jail," she said.

**LONGTIME PARK** supporter Betty Frankel, a Farmington Hills resident and member of the city's naturalist club, has circulated a petition and written a letter to county officials favoring purchase of the property.

"The land has wooded hillsides, a valley, open areas, and all kinds of terrain. There's a total lack of that sort of facility here. The county's parks are all at the northern end," Frankel said.



# I WANT YOU

## Can't give money away, IRS claims

By Craig Plechura staff writer

The man on the other end of the line was a bit incredulous upon learning that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) owed him money, not the other way around.

Patrick J. Harber, 20, of Farmington Hills was reached by the Farmington Observer at the home of his brother, Michael, and informed that his name was one of 15 persons on a list of Farmington-area residents who had tax refund checks coming to them from the IRS. He is one of 1,073 persons in the state whose IRS owes money.

Their refund checks were returned to the IRS by the post office as undeliverable.

"Hey, Pat," said the voice on the line. "The government owes you." Michael Harber repeated the surprising news: "The IRS owes you money."

It took Patrick a few seconds to respond, which is understandable. It takes a few seconds for the news to sink in when the word is the IRS is looking for you, and you should be glad.

"Are you kidding?" Harber said when asked if the money will come in handy. "The money will come in very handy - especially with this being the Christmas season and all. (The refund) probably won't be too much, especially with the financial situation I'm in now. But we'll see how much."

Harber said he didn't think the feds owed him money and that he lets his father, a financial accountant, "take care of my financial episodes."

The reason the IRS couldn't locate Harber, he figured, is that up until a week ago he was living in Houston, working as a phone solicitor for a company trying to sell condominiums. In 1981 he worked in Farmington Hills as a dishwasher and cook at a Big Boy restaurant.

To claim his refund, Harber tried to call the toll-free IRS number - 1-800-482-0870 Friday afternoon. He was put on hold for more than 15 minutes, so he hung up. In two subsequent attempts he got a busy signal, but he'll try again today to tell the IRS where to send his check, he said.

**UNCLE SAM** wants you to claim your tax refund - checks worth an average of \$400, according to Walt Dunningan, district public affairs officer for the IRS - if your name is:

- Rudolph Kortella, Farmington Hills, 48024.
- John W. and Deborah K. Rudberg, Farmington Hills 48024.
- Larry W. Zufelt, Farmington Hills 48024.
- Opal McNally, Farmington Hills 48018.

- Ramona G. Porter Melone, Farmington Hills 48018.
- Bernard Polhamus, Farmington Hills 48018.
- David K. Wellbaum, Farmington Hills 48018.
- Edward M. Briskey, Farmington Hills 48024.
- Walter M. and Helen E. Coon, Farmington Hills 48024.
- James Fadool, Farmington Hills 48024.
- Rosemary Fadool, Farmington Hills, 48024.
- Stephanie A. Gunsberg, Farmington Hills, 48024.

**LEAFING THROUGH** the phone book and calling city clerks in Farmington and Farmington Hills produced positive results in finding five of the 15 local persons owed money by the IRS.

Some who filed had read their name in a Detroit daily newspaper and already had claimed their refund check.

City Clerk Floyd Cairns of Farmington Hills knew one of the persons on the list, former nursery owner Walter Coon. Cairns even had Coon's address and phone number in Florida. But calls placed to Coon's forwarding address at Marco Island, Fla., were met with a recording stating that the number had been disconnected.

John and Deborah Rudberg were contacted by a sister who saw their names in the newspaper. The parents of James and Rosemary Fadool contacted them, according to relatives.

Stephanie A. Gunsberg, who had been married and changed her last name to Allen, was alerted of her windfall by the newspaper announcement, her mother said.

But 10 checks still are unclaimed by local residents or former local residents.

**NATIONALLY**, the IRS had 50,000 undeliverable checks last year, according to Dunningan. If persons who are owed money file subsequent-year returns the amount owed will be sent or credited to them in the next tax filing.

The majority of problems concerning delivery of refunds, said Dunningan, is caused by persons who move and fail to notify the U.S. Post Office or the IRS.

The IRS provides newspapers with the name and zip code of the persons seeking checks in an effort to notify persons who have money coming to them. However, he added, no addresses or monetary figures can be given out to reporters or police because tax information is confidential.

### They also ran

Observer reporter M.B. Dillon Ward caught up with four of the losers from this year's political campaigns and found them resigned to the past and optimistic about the future. Her report on John Anderson, Aldo Vagnozzi, David Pickering and Alan Feaver is on Page 2A of today's Observer.

### what's inside

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### GREAT PAPER!

"Had to call to tell you what a great paper you have! Sold the tree to second person who called. Still getting calls!" W. Mathews was pleased with results of the Observer & Economic classified ad placed to sell an artificial Christmas tree.

Remember...  
**One call does it all!**

**591-0900**  
Use your MasterCard or Visa



Passengers disembark from a park-and-ride bus at OCC's Orchard Ridge campus. RANDY DORST/staff photographer

## Projected park-and-ride cuts would affect 50,000 passengers

By Craig Plechura staff writer

The most popular park-and-ride bus route in the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) system stops 10 times every weekday morning and night at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

Buses are filled to capacity on route 851 nearly every day of the year. But unless the financially devastated regional transportation authority finds a big money package under its tree this Christmas, the local route will be cut at least in half after Dec. 31, said Gail Whitty, manager of communications for SEMTA.

Conceivably, the bus routes could be cut from 10 runs to two runs each morning and night, she said. "All 50,000 passengers of SEMTA would be affected because even people whose runs aren't eliminated will be scratched up," she said. "Things will be very, very crowded."

SEMTA officials have been in Lansing almost on a daily basis using every last-ditch effort to stave off an 80-percent cutback in personnel and services by Dec. 31. Because of the uncertainty on funding by the state, a tri-county tax surcharge that has \$21 million tied up in escrow, and diminishing federal subsidies, Whitty said SEMTA can't even draw up downstaged schedules and routes.

**THE PERSONS** most affected by proposed cutbacks and elimination of current bus routes who depend on SEMTA for transportation to jobs seek health facilities. Handicapped, blind and elderly persons showed up in large numbers at the hearings saying such things as:

"If you take away the bus I'm like a hostage in my own home."

But the able-bodied, middle-class and even the affluent use SEMTA, too, judging from the participation in the park-and-ride route that stops in Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield.

"I feel SEMTA should be self-supporting," said Ann Rosen of Southfield, who parks at O.C.C. five days a week and takes the bus to her job at General Motors in the Renaissance Center. "It should be run like a business like anything else."

Transportation authority spokesmen say no major metropolitan transportation authority in the world makes a profit and it's unreasonable to assume SEMTA can.

Rosen said that while black ink may be a difficult goal, SEMTA could take in more money simply by charging riders more.

"I don't think they charge enough," she said. "A dollar fifty from here to the RenCen isn't enough."

Transportation officials have claimed in the past that ride increases punish the poor who depend on buses most.

"From my point of view it's really a big bargain," Rosen said. "Too much of a bargain."

**CINNY SPOMER** of Keego Harbor takes the SEMTA bus at least once a week - on Thursdays when she takes an evening journalism class.

"The cuts are not going to be crucial to us," Spomer said, explaining that she and her husband both own cars and work downtown. "I think most people I know out here have two cars."

The Lodge expressway, especially in the winter, Spomer said, "is a mess." On bad days taking the bus to work is true trouble, she said, because one can read a book or newspaper instead of worrying about eye pavement.

"I moved here from Marquette in January and the city bus there is in (financial) trouble," Spomer says. "The difference is in Marquette you can walk anywhere. I went five years without a car."

A woman from Northville using the park-and-ride said she'll feel the pinch in her pocketbook if SEMTA routes are eliminated or so crowded that it makes it inconvenient for her to take a bus to her job at Wayne State University.

"You see that old car?" she said, pointing to a powder blue Duster. "I'll need a new one."