



# Farmington Observer

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## MetroVision faces off with apartments

By Joanne Maliszowski  
staff writer

If you are one of the many apartment residents wondering when you'll be tuning into cable TV, be patient. You aren't as lucky as most single-family homeowners.

MetroVision began installing cable in Farmington and Farmington Hills neighborhoods in January 1983, but apartment residents won't get cable

TV until MetroVision and the apartment complex owner reach an agreement allowing cable installation. "It's a matter of allowing MetroVision to get into the door," said Lark Samouellian, executive director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC).

For the most part, a contract is a writing agreement that allows the cable firm an easement to put the cable lines on private property, said Bob McCann,

MetroVision systems manager.

"Depending on who you are dealing with, it's a simple or a complex contract," said Ann Praven, MetroVision office manager.

But the contract, as allowed by the tri-city's franchise and cable ordinance, can also include provisions for the apartment owners to charge MetroVision an access fee — a charge above the cost of installing cable in their units.

The access fee is determined by the apartment complex owner.

"SEE, APARTMENTS (owners) want a cut of the mustard," Samouellian said.

MetroVision, in turn, has the option of passing that fee on to the subscribers in addition to the rates they will pay for whatever tier of cable service they choose.

"These people know when they sign-

up for cable," said Ann Praven, MetroVision office manager, referring to apartment residents knowing they will be paying an additional fee.

For example, the basic cable fee is \$7.25 a month. The average subscriber's monthly bill is \$25 to \$30 because of various options. But an apartment subscriber's bill could be more costly than that if their landlord insists on charging MetroVision an access fee. But not all complex owners charge MetroVision an access fee.

If MetroVision cannot work out an agreement with an apartment complex owner, Samouellian said, residents or the cable firm may go to the SWOCC with the problem.

"The commission has the right of eminent domain," Samouellian said, referring to an ordinance which allows the city to "commence condemnation proceedings in accordance with applicable law" so the cable firm can serve apartment residents.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Botsford Elementary School first graders flock around their principal, Leo Laruwe, Laruwe, 57, has been principal for every class that has gone through Botsford since the Clarenceville School District

facility opened its doors 20 years ago. Many of these have included Redford students. Laruwe recently announced that he will retire after the current school year.

## Principal packs school bags

By Dan Vecchioni  
staff writer

Leo Laruwe has aged gracefully behind the same desk for parts of four decades. Laruwe, who took the job of principal of Botsford Elementary School in Livonia when the school's doors first opened in 1924, has held the same post for 40 years.

But this year will be his last. Laruwe, 57, the self-proclaimed "senior citizen of the Clarenceville School District as far as tenure is concerned," has announced that he will retire in June.

"I'm only retiring from this job," Laruwe said. "I'd like to retire while I'm still healthy and can enjoy it and get into something a little more relaxing with less pressure. This has been a big part of my life. My emotions run from being happy to feeling apprehensive and sad. It's going to hit me."

LARUWE HAS been with the Clarenceville district since 1944, when as a 22-year-old Wayne State University graduate he was hired to teach music. His teaching career did not last long. Three years later, then Superintendent L. E. Schmidt appointed him a principal and, two years later, he was named to the top post at the new Botsford school.

"I was installed along with the plumbing and light fixtures," Laruwe said. "I've been the one and only principal of the building. I'll never forget how proud I felt when the building was new and I was installed as principal."

The years have been kind to both Botsford, which celebrates its 30th birthday March 1, and Laruwe. Botsford went through three expansions in its first 15 years, was repainted last year and, currently, is undergoing a transformation to make it more energy efficient. It also has sur-

vived in the wake of declining enrollment and currently serves about 520 students from Livonia and Redford Township.

Laruwe's reddish brown hair now shows some gray around the temples. But he still talks excitedly about the future and his hopes to land part-time work at a golf course ("so I'll get to work at golf free"), in videotaping (his hobby) or in a hardware store (such as where he worked when he was in school).

What motivates a person to remain in the same position for 40 years?

"I'VE ENJOYED IT," Laruwe said. "One time, many years ago, I interviewed with the Birmingham schools. But I decided 'no' to their offer. I enjoyed Clarenceville. It's a nice, small community. It's kind of homey. I can get things done here easier than in a large district."

Laruwe did not speculate on the fate of small districts like Clarence-

ville, which takes in portions of Livonia, Redford Township and Farmington Hills.

"But I've heard rumors for 30 years that we were going to be annexed by the Livonia School District," he said.

During his career in Clarenceville and Botsford school, Laruwe has seen changes take place — some obvious, like the advent of computer education, and some not so obvious.

"Things we have now, that are prevalent, are broken homes and single-parent families," Laruwe said. "Most youngsters roll with the punches. But some are hurt by it and need special help."

Family life is important to Laruwe. He and his wife, Mary Lou, plan to take their motorhome on some trips away from their Northville home, "but we don't want to be away from our children and grandchildren."

In fact, Laruwe said, his oldest granddaughter will be starting school at Botsford in the fall, "but grandpa won't be around."

## Better ride in future for commuter

By Tom Baer  
staff writer

Motorists can expect smoother — and, in some cases, wider — Farmington streets by 1990.

Street improvements throughout the city are prime items in Farmington's six-year capital improvement program, which was accepted by the city council by a 5-0 vote during its Feb. 20 regular meeting.

Over the next six years, city officials say they intend to spend \$8.3 million for improvements ranging from street and sidewalk repairs to the possible installation of a 911 emergency telephone number.

Officials hope to obtain the majority of the improvement money — \$6.9 million — from federal and Oakland County sources, according to City Manager Robert F. Deadman, with the city providing the remaining \$1.4 million.

"It's an annual requirement for our planning commission to produce this document (a report detailing the planned improvements)," Deadman said, "and I think it's an annual exercise that's important to the community. We're reviewing future needs... identifying needs to be met."

High up on the planning commission's list of "major street improvements" is a \$2 million upgrading of Orchard Lake Road, including widening it from two to four or five lanes from Grand River north to 10 Mile Road.

"Traffic volumes on Orchard Lake are increasing and the condition of the road is bad," Deadman said. "It's very difficult to make turning movements off the road because it's a two-lane road."

But improvement of Orchard Lake may be delayed "because of current state legislation which limits the amount of county funding which can be used for improving roads," according to the planning commission report.

OTHER ROAD improvements, totaling \$635,000, include:

• Farmington Road north of Shawwassee Road. "The improvement will include the replacement of the existing road," the planning commission report said. "This road has experienced severe base failure which has resulted in the need for a new road."

• Shawwassee Road west of Orchard Lake Road to Farmington Road. Repairs will include replacement of numerous concrete slabs as well as an asphalt overlay.

*'Traffic volumes on Orchard Lake Road are increasing and the condition of the road is bad.'*

—Robert Deadman  
Farmington City Manager

- Power Road north of Grand River. Repairs will include replacement of several slabs of concrete, the shaving of the surface and joint repairs.
- Nine Mile Road at Grand River. Nine Mile will be widened at the intersection to provide for a left-turn lane onto Grand River. Improvements will also be made in the radius of Nine Mile between Hawthorne Street and Grand River.

Under "local street improvements," the planning commission report lists \$560,000 worth of repairs to streets in the Belleair, Warner Farms, Chatham Hills and Alta Loma subdivisions, as well as Valleyview Circle and Street and other local streets "in other subdivisions throughout the city," according to the report.

Two community storm drains, the Caddell Drain in the western part of the city and the River Rouge Drains will be constructed for \$978,000.

The Caddell, scheduled for completion during the 1984-85 fiscal year, will also serve portions of Novi and Farmington Hills. The Rouge Drains are part of a master storm drain plan developed by the city of Farmington Hills.

CENTRAL BUSINESS district improvements and a parking-nodes study will cost \$60,000.

The plan for downtown includes additional landscape treatment on city-owned property. Deciduous trees will be planted, "pedestrian-oriented" spaces developed and screens placed on rubbish containers. A consultant will be hired to study parking needs in the downtown district.

City officials hope to spend \$200,000 on parks and recreation improvements at Shawwassee and Drake parks, including leasing of additional land from the school district and other sources, construction of parking facilities, purchase of playground equipment, park benches and a picnic shelter.

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## Robotic firm eyes the Hills

By Tom Baer  
staff writer

Telephones ring constantly these days at the Automatrix Inc. office on Industrial Park Drive in Farmington Hills.

"Since that press release went out, it's been crazy around here," a receptionist said last Friday morning. "Everybody wants to know what's going on."

"Automatrix's small Michigan presence will become measurably larger now that the Massachusetts robot manufacturer has decided to expand to the Detroit area — possibly in Farmington Hills, where it already has a small

sales office in the industrial complex near Grand River and 10 Mile.

Automatrix's Michigan facility could employ 1,600 people "over a period of time," according to company president Phil Villers.

"What we're setting up (in Michigan) is a wholly owned subsidiary to handle the customization of robots to fit the needs of our customers in the automotive," said Villers in a telephone interview from company headquarters in Billerica, Mass., near Boston. Villers said that about 20 to 40 pro-

duction and supervisory employees will be hired for what he hopes will be a 25,000-square-foot Michigan plant.

"But that's just the beginning," Villers said. "Ultimately, we hope to build up to 1,000 (employees) over a period of time."

Villers, who said the company headquarters would remain in Massachusetts, claimed that a Detroit-area site would be chosen "in the next few months" and that production would begin by summer.

ASKED WHY he picked Michigan, a state which has lost many businesses during the last few years because of high taxes and workman's compensation problems, Villers said. "We found we were truly welcome in the state, especially by your governor, James Blanchard, who's quite a salesman."

He added, "Our business depends on brain power. If we can get the brain power, we're sure we can thrive just about anywhere."

Automatrix officials said that no tax-abatement schemes or other offers were made by state officials to entice the high-tech business to come here.

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