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Chief knocks audit report

By Joanne Malazewski staff writer

Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols lashed out at a recent audit of his department, saying its recommendations are a throwback to the old, inefficient operating procedures which he threw out after taking command in 1977.

The chief's criticism came at this week's Farmington Hills study session where auditors, Plante & Moran and the veteran police administrator faced off.

"If you'll refresh your memory, this was exactly like it was," Nichols told council members about one of the auditors' recommendations.

Auditors meanwhile tried to soothe Nichols' anger by saying that the rec-

ommendations were "ideas" and "opportunities" rather than outright criticism of the police department.

"We're not saying that the way the police department is organized today is bad or detrimental," said auditor Michael Brice.

But Nichols lashed out at the auditors, saying if they had "done their homework" they would have known that the recommendations they made were in force when he arrived in Farmington Hills. That department structure, he said, only led to animosity between the department's employees.

"WE SENSE the communications in the department could be improved," Naganogot said, adding the auditors conducted interviews of police employees. "There was a common belief that communications could be improved."

"I challenge the statement that you talked to the individuals involved," Nichols said, referring to the heads of the juvenile and detective departments.

The "communications problem, if there is one," Nichols said, is "the vestiges of what once was (the old organization)." Some police department employees, he said, "haven't taken reorganization well."

In effect, Nichols told the auditors, the problem lies with the people who have failed to adjust to the department's current structure rather than the fault of the structure itself.

The auditors, for example, suggested reassigning staff from the juvenile department to the detective division because the detectives' work load in the last three years has been about four times greater than the juvenile department's case load.

"Are you aware of the amount of work the juvenile department does?" Nichols asked the auditors. "If we follow the type of recommendations, you can kiss Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention goodbye."

"It's a simple mathematical thing," Nichols said, adding that reassigning staff means fewer people to maintain existing work levels and programs.

"We're not recommending that any of these activities be discontinued or dismantled," Brice said.

BUT NICHOLS lambasted the auditors saying they should have more fully investigated the department to "see what's really happening."

"Had they done any incisive investigation they would have found there is a reason why things are the way they are."

Councilwoman Jodi Soronen agreed with Nichols, adding that "the entire premise is based on generalities," rather than an investigation of the police department's structure.

The same goes, Nichols said, for the auditor's recommendation that the po-

lice department should be reorganized.

Mayor blasts library budget

Farmington Hills Mayor Charles Williams has widened the debate between himself and the library system by criticizing what he sees as an exorbitant surplus held by the library over the past four years.

"It should be noted that for every year ending in the last four years, that the amount of cash the library retains has ranged between \$233,000 and \$290,000 per year," said Williams in a recent analysis of library operation based on a report from the auditing firm of Plante & Moran.

Williams' response was prompted by a series of articles in the Farmington Observer, a portion of which outlined the debate on whether the library should be independent of the two city governments providing funding — Farmington and Farmington Hills.

He pointed out that the retained fund balance for those years ranged between \$235,000 and \$251,000 for those four years, amounting to a 20.3 percent reserve of total expenditures.

THE LIBRARY, said Williams, should follow the lead of the city of Farmington Hills which maintains a 10 percent reserve fund.

"I would maintain, based upon the

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Rol Mathieu is one of a select group of people in this country — World War I veterans. He recalled those days from his Livonia home this week.

Veteran seeks comrades from the dwindling ranks

By Teri Dumas staff writer

Everybody has been young before, but not everybody has been old before, and only a few are granted old age.

Rol Mathieu, who derives the unusual spelling of his name from his French heritage, wrote that passage not long ago in a veterans newsletter he edits.

Not only does it say something about the uncertainties of growing old, but it says even more about the author.

At age 80, Mathieu is in appearance and attitude a man at least 10 years younger. After a full recovery from a stroke four years ago that left him speechless and unable to walk, he today rides a bike and mows his own lawn with perfect results.

With a sense of humor that keeps on coming, the Livonia resident has the distinction of being a member of an increasingly shrinking number of people — veterans of World War I.

ACCORDING to Mathieu's figures, 4.5 million men returned from the

war that was to "make the world safe for democracy," and today there are less than 275,000 veterans left to tell of it.

"I'm always looking for new members for the chapter," he says of the Veterans of World War I chapter in Farmington, which he organized in 1978. "Whenever I go to the grocery store and see an old crock like myself, I ask him if he's been in World War I. If he has, I give him the sales pitch and hand him an application."

Mathieu has an American flag that flies every day over his home on Yale Street in Livonia. He has been married to Vera Mathieu, also 80, for 65 years. This week, he took time out to recall the days he was called on to fight in France as a doughboy. It was 70 years ago last week that the first world war erupted.

Mathieu, a native of Minneapolis, was drafted and received his training at Camp Dodge, Iowa. He was shipped to artillery school in England two weeks after he married. The fighting in France was his next stop.

A member of the National Guard for three years before the United States entered the war in 1917,

Mathieu's assigned rank was first sergeant, leaving him responsible for a 250-member outfit.

He recalls the French were grateful to the Americans, and that living quarters were poor. For the times spent out of the trenches, soldiers often were housed in barns.

"I'm not saying they (conditions) were unsanitary," he said mockingly. "But when they move the cows out and move the soldiers in, it wasn't the best of conditions."

SICKNESS and death were everywhere.

"I don't ever remember seeing a doctor the whole time I was over there," he said of his eight-month stay.

He also recalls many deaths due to the Spanish flu, noted in history books as claiming tens of millions of lives during World War I.

"During the flu I used to take two truckloads of coffins every morning and bury them. There was no medicine."

There was a different kind of patriotism back then, as well, he says.

"Parents didn't object to their sons going into the war. And I can only

think of one cure when a fellow avoided the draft," he said. "There was a terrific amount of enlistments."

After the war, Mathieu returned to a haberdashery firm he worked for before the war and worked as a salesman. At one point in his career, he met Harry Truman, who was a competitor of mine in Kansas City. Although not personal friends, they often exchanged greetings when they met in the city.

Eventually, Mathieu became a regional manager for the chain and spent many years on the road. Mathieu, his wife and their two children moved almost annually, so much so that his wife often joked about "buying a last" as a residence. His next career move was to the Shell Oil Co., where he retired.

A resident of Livonia for 21 years, he says he loves his neighborhood. School children often visit his home with history questions for school reports.

How does he stay fit?

"I just mowed the front and back lawn this morning. So I don't get up at 10 in the morning and have breakfast. I work hard and I do it everyday."

Homeowners' paycheck is mortgage casualty

By Joanne Malazewski staff writer

Imagine making a mortgage payment of \$1,267 a month.

That's the new reality in Farmington Hills. At least it's the hard-core truth

for those living with a \$107,000 mortgage.

In fact, lending institutions are figuring that 30 percent of a couple's total income will be devoted to home payments, said Richard Miller, Farmington Hills superintendent of building and zoning.

"That's a round, qualifying figure," he added.

THE CULPRIT for such high mortgage payments, of course, is interest rates now at 13.5-14.5 percent, with still more increases expected, Miller said.

But interest rates are not the only villains.

Cost of land has increased, as has the cost of materials and labor, Miller said. Potential homebuyers, particularly young, professional couples, are agitated in the market, however, for the larger, more expensive homes in the more ex-

pensive and status-oriented subdivisions.

DESPITE HIGH costs, however, the number of building permits in Farmington Hills during 1983 was five times greater than in 1982 when the recession "bottomed-out," Miller said. That

change represents an increase in total valuation from \$4.3 million in 1982 to \$22.2 million last year.

"Mortgage costs are high yet, building has increased in our town," he added.

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oral quarrel Should Democrats choose female VP?

Walter Mondale, who looks like a good bet to be the Democratic standard bearer in the upcoming presidential election, has been interviewing possible running mates — including several prominent women.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: Should the Democrats nominate a woman for vice president? If the answer is yes, who should that woman be?

To answer this question, call us at 476-5495 anytime before 1 p.m. on Friday. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

Transplant hopes grow

By Diane Gato staff writer

Patients waiting for organ transplants will have less waiting time a bill now under consideration by federal legislators takes effect.

Representatives and senators have recently passed separate bills to improve the process of matching organs with those in need. A special committee will be formed to work out a compromise bill.

Resolution of these differences

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