

# Farmington Observer

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## Funds are eyed to aid seniors and downtown

By Joanne Mallazewski  
staff writer

Sprucing up Farmington's central business district and providing services for handicapped and senior citizens are targeted uses for Farmington's expected \$40,000 in 1985-86 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money.

Residents are invited to offer their opinion of the city's proposed uses of its annual share of federal money at a public hearing scheduled for 8 p.m., Jan. 7 in Farmington council chambers.

City council several months ago renewed a three-year contract with Oakland County to participate in the CDBG program. Although funding originates at the federal level, Oakland County distributes the money to smaller communities, said Bob Schultz, Farmington administrative assistant.

Because the money is allocated from the federal government, city officials are unsure of the exact amount of CDBG money that will be coming through, Schultz said. But if past history remains unchanged the amount should be around \$48,000, he said.

IN ORDER to receive the CDBG money, city officials prepared a proposed three-year plan of projects that could be completed with the grant money.

The three-year plan includes providing direct services to the handicapped and senior citizens such as installing dead bolt locks and other minor home repairs. City officials also propose to use some of the money to improve access to public buildings for the handicapped and to provide special equipment in the city parks for handicapped.

But the three-year plan also includes projects designed to improve the park-

ing, aesthetics and marketability of the city's business district.

Some of the projects suggested to help spruce up downtown include landscaping, pedestrian rest areas, rubbish dumpster enclosures, lighting improvements and trees, according to the three-year plan.

City officials will also conduct a downtown beautification study as well as a study of downtown parking. The parking study will examine the use of parking facilities and make recommendations for changes or additions.

OVER THE years, suggestions have been made to build a parking ramp. Downtown Farmington parking is free on the street and in the mall parking lots.

A part of the money also would be used to complete the Farmington Road sidewalk from downtown Farmington to Nine Mile, on the west side of Farmington Road.

This walkway will provide a sidewalk for the handicapped and senior citizens who live at the Community Living center and Kingslane and Country Estates Apartments.

"If you improve the downtown's under-utilized areas, civic areas or parks, you're benefitting the whole community," Schultz said.

"Entitlement communities (those which receive CDBG money) must show that, taken as a whole, its programs benefit low and moderate income types."

While a requirement is that overall in the county, the "preponderant amount of money is benefiting low-to-moderate income families," most of Farmington does not qualify as a low-to-moderate income community, Schultz said.

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**Best friends**

Christina Whitley spent the day before Christmas playing with her dog, Banjo. Christina, 12, came to Farmington Hills from Wisconsin to

spend the holidays with her grandmother, who lives in the Mulrwood apartment complex at Grand River and Drake Road.

CAMILLE MCCOY/staff photographer

## Work begins on TV studio

A ribbon hanging from a television camera was cut last week to signal the start of work on the telecommunications center for the Farmington Public Schools.

The center, located in Room E8 of North Farmington High School, will serve as the production headquarters for all programming on channel 10 on the MetroVision cable system, which is available for a fee to Farmington-area viewers.

Some \$80,000 worth of equipment for the program, purchased by MetroVision for use by the school district, has been arriving at the studio since late November, officials said. Delivery will be complete by early January.

When completed, the studio will be a full television production complex, complete with editing and duplication capability.

Cable TV could be used for activities as diverse as televising live high school sports and drama and providing security alarms in buildings, school officials have said.

Dean Cobb, a 37-year-old English and speech teacher at North Farmington, will coordinate the telecommunications program. Cobb has said he hopes to have a "full service" studio, which can be used as a training center for would-be "telecommunicators."

Cobb has said he hopes to start teaching classes and broadcasting by early next year.

MetroVision's equipment includes cameras, lights and editing gear, school officials have said. The Farmington Board of Education has allocated an-

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## Thousands of chickens and peanuts for pay

By Tom Baer  
staff writer

THE GREAT Depression knocked Henry Trombley right out of the Farmington Post Office in the mid-1930s. The great fire of 1947 did the same.

But Trombley survived both disasters to serve the United States Postal Service and its patrons for more than 40 years, the last 19 as postmaster in Farmington.

"I've seen two, maybe three generations of kids grow up in this town," said

Trombley, now a hearty 82, from the kitchen of the white frame house on Shawasssee Road he designed and helped build more than 40 years ago.

"The men who fought the Second World War, why, I remembered most of them from when they could barely get their noses over the counter when they'd come in for their mail."

That's how people got their mail in 1927 when Trombley was hired on at the Farmington Post Office: They came in to pick it up. There was no city mail delivery.

Much of Farmington's mail arrived from Detroit by electric streetcar in Trombley's day, and a horse-drawn wagon was dispatched from Farmington every day to pick up mail at a smaller station known as Elm about 12 miles to the south.

"Elm was where Middlebelt Road crossed the railroad tracks," Trombley remembered.

A fugitive from the chores on a dairy farm in what is now Franklin (a teenage Floyd Cairns, longtime Farmington Hills City Clerk, was a milk customer), Trombley specialized in "financial matters" at the post office.

He sold postal money orders — and his services were much in demand after the hard times came along and "everything went to flop" in his words.

"About three years after I got here, along about 1930, the two banks in town failed," he remembered. "Nobody could write a check in the area. The town was right on its rear for money transactions. We wrote money orders until hell wouldn't have it."

BUT THE SAME economic catastrophe which kept Trombley busy in the early '30s caused him to change careers temporarily in the middle of the decade. He was laid off because of insufficient stamp sales.

"I just went across the street and clerked in the hardware store," he remembered. "It was one of the most complete country hardware you ever saw. We had everything from dynamite to plow points to furniture."

He stayed at the store, Hatton's Hardware, for about three years. Then things changed for the better and his old job came open.

a room with toilet facilities from the schools.

Trombley was named postmaster back in the days when it was very much a political appointment. He became the first Republican postmaster appointed in Michigan in 20 years when he was commissioned in August of 1953.

His commission was signed by Arthur Summerfield, Postmaster General during the Eisenhower administrations. He retired in 1972 after moving the post office several times, the last to its present location on Slocum Street.

For much of Trombley's career, the Farmington Post Office was located on the south side of Grand River, a few doors west of Farmington Road.

But a gigantic fire in January of 1947 destroyed most of the businesses on that block, including the post office. Overnight, it was moved across the street to the red-brick Town Hall where it stayed for a few weeks.

WHEN TROMBLEY came to Farmington, first-class postage was two cents, postal cards a penny and Christmas cards in unsealed envelopes a cent and a half. Those unsealed envelopes with the flaps tucked in caused problems, Trombley said.

"It could be a nasty little pocket for somebody else's letter to fall into and take a ride across country," he said. "It was unusual to have a Christmas card, a cent-and-a-half one, be delivered six weeks after Christmas."

And there were other problems at the post office over the years. "Sometimes you'd come to work and there'd be a couple of thousand day-old chickens," Trombley said. "They'd come from a big hatchery in Zeeland, Mich. The farmers here bought them."

## Postmaster recalls

lon weren't always liberal with the funds for the local offices, Trombley remembered.

"Lot of times, postmasters had to almost build their own post office and buy their own equipment to run it," he added.

But Trombley had a take-it-as-it-comes attitude toward his job, and it seemed to serve him well over the years.

"It's like rummy, the card game — draw, cuss and discard," he said. "Everyday was alike . . . dirty the dishes, wash 'em and get 'em out again tomorrow."

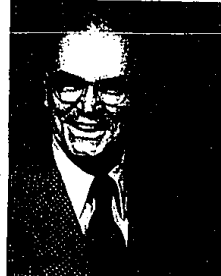
TROMBLEY, WHO supervised 145 people at the time of his retirement, certainly wasn't raving about his pay, even when he was top man in the Farmington office.

"It wasn't big pay — 65 cents an hour when I started," he said. "When I retired I was making about \$21,000. It was peanuts all the way through. But it gave me a lot of time to myself. I've always been quite a handyman . . . anything and everything . . . built my house myself."

The Trombleys — Henry and wife

Beulah will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary next June 30 — are year-round residents of Farmington. Beulah was an administrator at the old

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Henry Trombley



Longtime Farmington Postmaster Henry Trombley (right) meets Arthur Sommerville, postmaster general under Eisenhower, at the Detroit Post Office.

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Because New Year's falls on Tuesday this year, you'll find us at your home on the Saturday before the holiday (instead of Monday).

**Deadlines for Saturday, December 29 edition:**  
CLASSIFIED Thursday, December 27 - 5 p.m.  
RETAIL Thursday, December 27 - 12 Noon

**Deadlines for Thursday, January 3 edition:**  
CLASSIFIED Monday, December 31 5 p.m.  
RETAIL Monday, December 31, 10 a.m.  
FRIDAY, December 28, 4 p.m.

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