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Twenty-five cents

Spreen says 'no comment' to job rumors

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Former Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen has refused comment on rumors that he is vying for the job of Farmington Hills police chief — a position held for seven years by the new Sheriff John Nichols.

"I'm not making any comments. That's kind of rare for me," said Spreen, 65.

Spreen is out of a job after being trounced in November by veteran county executive Daniel Murphy in a bid for the Oakland County executive's post.

Although Spreen refused to comment, he did not deny the rumor when asked if he had applied for the vacant chief's post.

"There are doors that are there. And I will be pecking into some to see what lies there for me. I'm prepared. I'm looking for opportunity."

A replacement is being sought for former Farmington Hills Police Chief

John Nichols who was elected Oakland County Sheriff in November, replacing Spreen.

Dec. 31 was Nichols' last day as Farmington Hills chief.

City Manager William Costick has repeatedly made it clear in the past few weeks that he intends to keep the identity of the 30 applicants confidential until a new chief is chosen. A new chief is expected to be selected by mid-to-late January.

Costick admitted though that there are a "few from within the department" who have applied. But he also refused to disclose their names.

Spreen, a Farmington Hills resident, said he is looking into several job opportunities. Some of the opportunities, he said, are in Washington D.C., Virginia, and "out West."

But the 12-year veteran Oakland County sheriff said he wants to stay in Michigan.

"I'm not making any comments on my future," Spreen said. "I'll probably do some teaching."

Spreen said he will finish work on his doctorate in educational sociology at Wayne State University.

Prior to his election 10 years ago and two subsequent re-elections as the only Democrat in a top county position, Spreen served as police commissioner in Detroit. Before his move to Michigan, Spreen worked in the New York City Police Department for 23 years.

"We're looking for someone who's been around," he said "a number of years of experience in Michigan" and in a "community of comparable size of Farmington Hills," Costick said last week.

A bachelor's degree in some area of criminal justice is one of the minimum requirements for the job. Others include achievement and experience in administration, supervision, budget preparation and labor and public relations. "Actual field experience" is also wanted, Costick said.



It's a muddy time for crews working at the corner of 3 Mile and Farmington roads. But work continues on the future home of the new Crossroads shopping center in Farmington.

CAMILLE MCCOY/staff photographer

Mudder of a job Work continues on shopping complex

By Tom Baer staff writer

Working construction these wet winter days is a real mudder of a job.

Just ask the men who labor in the acres of wet, soft, sticky earth upon which the Farmington Crossroads shopping center someday will stand at Nine Mile and Farmington roads.

"It's definitely a mud hole," said Ray Vagnetti of Livonia. Vagnetti showed

up at the construction site Friday afternoon to pour a few yards of 3,000-pound strength concrete into a 42-inch-deep trench to create the foundation of a building.

The day was most unwintery. Unseasonably warm temperatures (a record 64 degrees was recorded at Metro Airport) melted the remnants of Wednesday's four-inch snowfall, and a steady drizzle added still more moisture to the scene.

At Nine and Farmington, the result was several small lakes separated by

peninsulas of light brown mud.

"Usually we don't have to work in this stuff," said Vagnetti, who gets \$13 an hour for his efforts. "It freezes, and that's that."

But there's been enough winter so far

to keep the trenches firm, said Dave James, a Walled Lake resident, also on duty last Friday.

"There's a little frost left in it," said

Please turn to Page 6



With mud to their knees, Dave James (left) and Dan Right keep the cement pouring.

CAMILLE MCCOY/staff photographer

Improvements are topic tonight

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

The long-debated Farmington Hills capital improvements program is still alive, despite the overwhelming defeat in November of a proposition to pay for the six-year plan.

The Farmington Hills council will discuss the city's capital improvements program at a special meeting at 7:30 p.m. tonight. With the defeat of the proposition, the council now faces reassessing the improvements plan and how to pay for it.

"Council will talk about where we go from here," City Manager William Costick said.

By an almost 2-1 margin, voters in November turned down the city's request for a charter amendment to levy a 1.5-mill tax for 20 years for capital improvements.

PASSAGE OF the tax would have extended the city's charter limit from the current 10 mills to 11.5. The levy would have raised \$1.5 million to help pay for projects in the improvements plan.

The city has the authority, under the city charter, to raise the tax rate for capital improvements. With the city's current 8-mill levy, city officials could levy up to two additional mills for capital improvements without voter approval.

The council also could ask voters for a tax increase to pay for improvements.

Another option would be to continue earmarking money from the city's general fund for its capital improvements fund.

SUCH A special tax would be separate from the city charter limit. Under

this method of financing, city officials still would still be able to levy the 10 mills allowed under the charter for operations and debt without seeking voter approval.

The city's surplus, generally a hotly debated issue among council members during budget time, topped \$3.4 million in 1983-84. That's up from 1982-83 when it stood at \$3.3 million, city finance director Charles Rosch said.

Of the total \$3.4 million, \$1.9 million is reserved for projects such as the Caddell Drain projects, and 12 Mile Road Improvements — programs also in the capital improvements program.

The city's remaining \$1.5 million of surplus is unreserved. The unreserved surplus is about 10 percent of the current \$15 million budget. A city generally tries to have at least a 10-percent surplus.

Please turn to Page 6

CITY OFFICIALS are working on a financing plan — also listed in the six-year program — that would provide tax revenues for improvements along the 12 Mile "growth corridor."

City officials are considering creating a Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA). Under this plan, the property value of land in a 3/4-mile-long strip on 12 Mile would be frozen. The city would then be able to take all or part of any property tax revenue based on the assessment increase.

The proposed TIFA district would be bounded on the north by 12 Mile Road, on the south by I-696, on the west by Haggerty Road and on the east by property owned by the U.S. Postal Service, about one-quarter mile east of Farmington Road.

oral quarrel

Was subway gunner a hero or a villain?

Bernhard Goetz, who told police he shot four teens when they tried to rob him on a New York City subway train, has been dubbed the "Death Wish Guy" and "Subway Vigilante" by the city's newspapers. The 35-year-old, self-employed electrician, described as a model citizen, has received wide support from many citizens of New York. As of Wednesday, he was fighting extradition from New Hampshire. All four teens are expected to live, although

one is paralyzed from the waist down as a result of the shooting.

Today's Oral Quarrel question:

Had you been on that subway train facing those youths, what would you have done?

To answer the question, call 477-5498 before 1 p.m. Friday. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

what's inside

- Amusements 4-5C
- Business 3C
- Cable Connection 10A
- Classifieds . . . Sections C-D
- Club Circuit 4B
- Community Calendar . . . 3B
- Crossword puzzle 12C
- Engagements 3E
- Obituaries 2A
- Recreation News 2A
- Sports 1-3C
- Suburban Life 1-5B
- Travel 7C

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New motels are coming to Hills

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Farmington Hills may soon have six new motels to match the city's growing reputation as one of the hottest office areas in the Detroit area.

Although many plans and bids for rezoning are incomplete, zoning supervisor Hal Rowe listed six new motels targeted for Farmington Hills.

"The zoning is proper already for three of them," Rowe said. The three proposed motels are:

• A Bargaintel Motel near the Grand River and 10 Mile Road split, by the Sirpenca Restaurant.

• A still-unnamed facility on 12 Mile Road, east of Orchard Lake Road, behind Mama Locricchio's restaurant. The five acres until recently was owned by Detroit Edison. Site plans have not yet been turned in, Rowe said. But he believes the proposed facility is expected to be a Hampton House motel, a part of Brock Hotels.

Please turn to Page 10