

Farmlington Observer

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City launches fix up program for local roads

The city of Farmington has launched a \$170,000 road program which will take repairs on three streets and two intersections.

Repairs will be made to Manning, Mayfield and Cloverdale, according to City Manager Robert Deadman. Intersection improvements will be made at Lansbury and Heatherton and Lamar and Leelanau.

While the city will foot the majority of the bill, \$106,000, homeowners living along the three streets will be assessed \$64,052. Property owners will be assessed \$8.40 a front foot, according to Deadman. If the plan is approved homeowners will have an average annual payment of \$154 for the next ten years.

The city will bear the cost of intersection repairs, totalling \$49,542. That cost is included in the \$106,000 figure.

A March 5 meeting is slated with residents of the area to explain the repair program.

The city proposes laying a 3.5-inch asphalt layer on the streets because of the extensive damage. Normally, a one-inch asphalt surface would be laid, he said.

"To place one inch of asphalt on these roads would be a waste of money," Deadman told council Monday evening.

"A better approach would be that the city contribute the cost of one inch of asphalt toward a more permanent repair," he said. "We believe it would be in the best interest of the community and the property owners to proceed with the more permanent repairs."

The surface cracking and the thin asphalt cap has allowed water to penetrate into the base, said Deadman.

"Normal freeze-thaw cycles will continue to create potholes which will eventually deteriorate the strength of the base material."

The streets have been in need of repair for some time, according to Deadman, but repairs have been delayed because of water main problems which must be dealt with before actual repair can proceed.

"The joint bolts on the water main have deteriorated and the water department is presently replacing these bolts," he said.

But the winter freeze has forced a halt to these repairs until the ground thaws. Deadman estimates that it will be July or August before road repair begins.

THE INTERSECTION of Lansbury and Heatherton in Chatham Hills subdivision has been damaged because of ground water. Deadman has proposed that the intersection be removed and replaced, and that an edge drain be installed around the new intersection. Cost will be \$26,232.

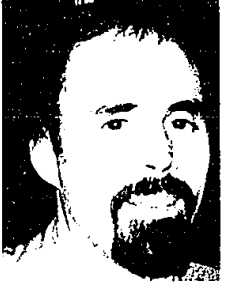
The intersection of Lamar and Leelanau suffers the same structural damage. Approximately 690 square yards of concrete will be replaced at this intersection, costing \$33,310.

Schools tap new money man

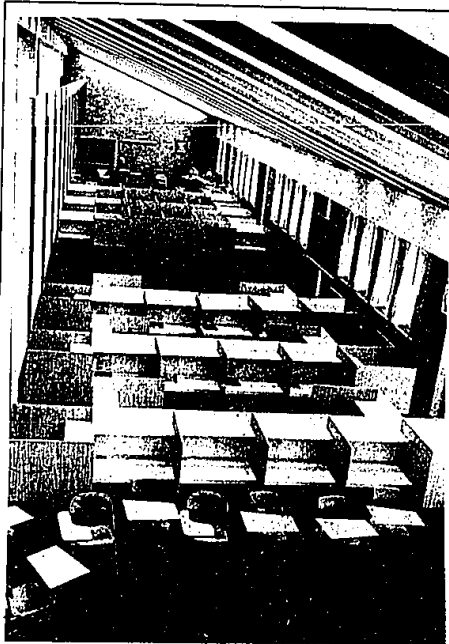
A former Farmington school administrator is returning to the district after almost eight years with the Huron Valley Schools to replace retiring finance chief William Prisk.

Michael Flanagan, 35, was appointed as the district's assistant superintendent of finances and services Tuesday by the school board in a 7-0 vote. His appointment was announced Tuesday.

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Michael Flanagan



This portion of one of OCC's buildings will be divided into separate classrooms.

Orchard Ridge makes sweep of campus

Students and faculty members at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus will be hearing the sounds of construction come spring as more than an \$800,000 renovation project gets under way at the Farmington Hills location.

Involving five buildings, the project begins in early May and should be completed by mid August, according to Dr. James Stevenson, provost of the 7,500-student Orchard Ridge campus.

"This renovation project will be very difficult," said Stevenson, who took over as provost last October. "I'll involve a lot of work in scheduling classes, because we're going to be renovating while classes are going on."

High on the list of improvements is the construction of 15 classrooms in areas that are now large open spaces.

"The campus was constructed 15 years ago with the open spaces for self-space instruction rather than with the typical, self-contained classrooms," Stevenson said.

"Because of that, we have a lot of rooms... without walls, so we're redesigning for that."

Chemistry and biology laboratories will be renovated "so that they'll have state-of-art equipment," said Stevenson. "We're going to do some work with air handling, hoods and venting."

DAVE BECKER, professor of chemistry at Orchard Ridge, said he'd welcome the improvements.

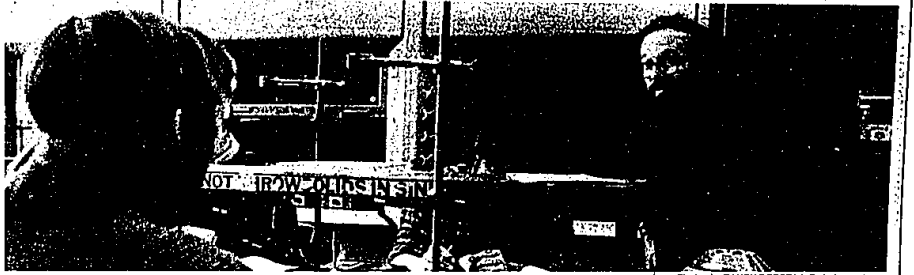
"It's mostly a safety renovation," Becker said in a lab crowded with students last Tuesday afternoon. "It's not that the labs are unsafe now, but in the 18 years since they were built, concepts of safety have changed."

"For example, solid working surfaces, not slinky tables, are important. And it'll be good to have sinks that students can reach without bending over the tables."

"The experiments we do have gotten more complex and therefore we need a physical setup that takes that into account."

Pointing to where an overhead metal duct, part of the lab's ventilation system, made a right angle, Becker continued. "Those corners tend to trap chemicals. If you opened that up, you'd find chemicals. Of course, everything hazardous in labs was removed long ago."

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Dave Becker, professor of chemistry at Oakland Community College, will have his chemistry lab remodeled in the college's renovation project.

Competition forces hospitals into marketing war

Attorneys opened the door, physicians and dentists followed and now hospitals are joining the ranks of professionals and professional organizations participating in the one-time taboo business of advertising.

"Hospitals used to be under the same mind set as physicians and attorneys. But advertising has become a necessity," said Jane Eckels, public affairs manager for the Southeast Michigan Hospital Council.

Pick up a newspaper, pass a billboard or turn on the television and ads proclaiming Harper Hospital's cancer treatment center or Grace Hospital's "warm, friendly staff," or Providence Hospital's new Express Care can be found sharing space and air time with retailers.

"Advertising is part of a whole spectrum of things are changing for hospitals," Eckels said.

What has prompted the bulk of advertising is the economic realities now faced by most hospitals.

"The utilization of hospitals is going down," Eckels said. "Patients are not in as long and there are fewer admissions."

"That spells economic loss for hospitals. With more empty patient beds, health-care facilities are having a harder time meeting the ever-increasing costs of doing business."

"It's clearly a more competitive situation out there," said Arnie Spellman,

corporate marketing director for Harper-Grace Hospitals. "There is competition between hospitals for patients, competition between doctors for patients and competition between hospitals for doctors."

TO BLAME for the economic situation faced by hospitals are the relatively new attempts at containing ever-increasing health-care costs.

DRGs (diagnostic related groups), HMOs (Health Maintenance Organizations) and PPOs (Preferred Provider Organizations) — referred to as "alphabet soup" by some hospital administrators — have taken their toll on hospital business.

DRGs, for example, limit how long a patient stays in a hospital and puts a ceiling on the amount of Medicare payments a hospital receives for treating an elderly or disabled patient.

"The DRGs are beginning to limit the length of stay, and so we need more patients," said Brad Graber, marketing director at Providence Hospital.

The HMOs and PPOs offer set annual health-care fees but patients are limited to certain willing physicians and hospitals involved in these programs.

The result is that administrators must go out and seek patients and business for their hospitals, Eckels said. Advertising also involves enticing the multi-affiliated physician to a particular hospital, she said.

Despite the impact of the DRGs and other health-care packages, some hospitals have not yet jumped on the advertising bandwagon to lure patients.

Boisford General Hospital in Farmington Hills is one such hospital.

Administrator Gordon Cooper refused to comment on the issue. But Russ Tuttle, public relations director, said Boisford, a teaching hospital, "doesn't have a budget for that kind of advertising."

St. Mary Hospital in Livonia, on the other hand, got into advertising this year with the advent of the DRGs and other health-care packages.

"They (hospital administrators) cannot just assume physicians will bring in patients anymore," Eckels said.

And Spellman said: "We've proven to ourselves that the limited advertising we've done has been very beneficial."

The advent of DRGs, and particularly the HMOs and PPOs are involving the consumer to a greater extent in decisions about their health care, Eckels said.

Now patients tell physicians which hospital they want to enter. In turn, physicians are affiliating themselves with more than one hospital in order to keep their patients coming back.

"Hospitals are recognizing that consumers are having more and more decisions in their health care," said Brad Graber, marketing director at Providence Hospital in Southfield. "Patients are selecting their physicians because of where they are affiliated."

With consumers for the most part free to choose which hospital they prefer, facilities are putting their best foot forward to lure patients to their establishments.

"It's not like selling tires. Hospitals advertise either an image or a specific service," Eckels said.

Take Providence Hospital in Southfield as an example. Instead of advertising to all population segments and an entire spectrum of health-care needs, the hospital targets its advertising.

DOLLARS ARE spent on Providence's new Express Care emergency service which cuts waiting for minor

oral quarrel

How do you feel about no kids rule

The state Supreme Court recently ruled that landlords can restrict families with children to certain buildings in an apartment complex without necessarily violating the Michigan Civil Rights Act.

The ruling upheld two earlier lower court decisions favoring the Bezooz Corp., owner of the Mulwood and Fairmont Parks apartments in Farmington Hills.

The state Supreme Court said its ruling does not specify how many buildings could be restricted or whether in all cases such restrictions would be lawful.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: How do you feel about the state Supreme Court's decision? Should families with children be restricted to designated buildings in a complex?

To answer this question, call 477-5498 any time before 1 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 8. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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