

Farmington Observer

Volume 98 Number 40

Monday, February 25, 1985

Farmington, Michigan

32 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Top cops optimistic over seat belt law

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Local police officials expect few if any problems in enforcing a new bill requiring the use of seat belts. "From a law enforcement perspective, it's not an enforcement problem," said Frank Lauboff, director of the Farmington Public Safety Department. "It's going to be a benefit to all of us by a reduction in injuries."

Public education and the fact that seat belt use will be law in itself an aid to police enforcement, according to officials.

With or without a law, public education has helped to entice a greater percentage of Michigan motorists to buckle up, said Judy McVitt, analyst for traffic services of the Michigan State Police.

In 1981, for example, 11.1 percent of motorists involved in accidents used seat belts, she said. By 1983, 18.2 percent of motorists in accidents had been

wearing seat belts.

If all motorists used seat belts, it's believed deaths and serious injuries could be reduced by 60 percent, said McVitt.

THE NEW bill, effective July 1, may be just the impetus needed to entice those who usually don't think about seat belts to finally buckle up, McVitt said.

The bill requiring seat belt use passed the House of Representatives

last week by a 64-41 vote. Although the Senate approved the bill in January, it must still approve a change proposed by the House last week before being signed by the governor.

Seat belt use will be required by drivers and front-seat passengers in vehicles manufactured after Jan. 1, 1985. Failure to comply will result in a \$10 fine until Jan. 1, 1988 when it will increase to \$25. Violators will not receive penalty points on their record when is-

sued a violation.

The law will be enforced only as a secondary measure. Police cannot stop a motorist for a suspected violation of the seat belt law. The law can be enforced only after police stop a motorist on another traffic violation.

Officials' optimism about the relative ease of enforcing the law stems in part from the belief that many motorists will buckle up simply because the Michigan Legislature has made it law. "It was assumed we would get 55-40-

percent compliance without having to enforce it at all," said Rep. Willbur "Sandy" Brotherton, D-Farmington. Often, motorists don't wear seat belts because they never think about it, he said.

"There are a lot of people who aren't wearing them because they never thought about it very seriously. We thought if it were law, people would start reaching for them."

Please turn to Page 7

Growth spawns tax look

By Julie Brown
staff writer

Farmington Hills soon will launch an assessment campaign on commercial property spawned by the recent upswing in construction of commercial buildings, according to City Mgr. William Costick.

Farmington Hills city council members gave unanimous approval to a plan for reappraisal of commercial/industrial property within the city.

In a 5-0 vote Tuesday, the council approved the plan for review and reappraisal of all commercial and industrial property in the city.

City Manager William Costick was authorized to enter into a contract with the Oakland County Board of Equalization Department for the reappraisal. Council members also authorized the city assessor, Dean Babb, to advertise a position of commercial and industrial appraiser, to be added to the city's 1985-86 budget.

"It's something that's been in the works for quite a while," Costick said Friday. "We've had such a tremendous upsurge in growth. Our records are in need of updating."

MUCH OF that commercial growth includes construction of office buildings along Northwestern Highway, Costick said.

"That's the primary purpose behind it." The complete reappraisal is needed, he said, to ensure that all are treated fairly.

"It requires that we do a comprehensive study."

"Everything is going to be reviewed that's in the commercial and industrial classification," Babb said of the two-year project. The commercial/industrial classification includes apartment buildings.

"Right now, we have approximately 1,300 parcels (to review)," Babb said. New assessments are scheduled to take effect Dec. 31, 1986, he said.

The commercial and industrial appraiser position should be filled by the spring, City Manager Costick said. It will be a permanent position, and the city intends to advertise the salary as negotiable.

THE STATE has four levels of certification for assessors, Costick said. The Farmington Hills assessor is required to be at the fourth, or highest, level. Smaller communities, with smaller amounts of property to assess, often

Please turn to Page 7



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Bob Clark hopes the knowledge he has built through the years will aid in making his taxi service a success in the Farmington area.

Taxi Cabbies' reward is pushing hacks

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Her father was a taxi cab driver. She married a cab driver whose father, mother, brother and uncle all drove cabs for a living.

Now Anne Clark and her husband, Bob, operate a taxi cab company — ABC CAB — of their own in the Farmington area, a place Bob has admired for a long time.

"My only dream I've had is to own our own cab company," said Bob, a former driver with a major cab company in Detroit. "I took the knowledge I had in the city and applied it out here. I really liked the area. All we know is taxi cabs so that's how it started."

And since the first powder-blue taxi was put on the road in Farmington and Farmington Hills on July 24,

1984, things have been rolling for the Clarks.

The Clarks started their suburban taxi business with two cars and now have five. They want more to keep up with the growing business.

"RIGHT NOW business is at a maximum. Cars are not sitting," Bob said, about the 24-hour service. "The clock keeps ticking and the phone keeps ringing."

But when they put the first car on the road back in July, the Clarks were forced to start from square one.

"We basically had to start on the streets," Bob said.

The petition was filed "for determination of heirs," according to Catto's attorney, Kenneth Morris of Livonia.

"Apparently, when the original petition was filed, she wasn't listed as a daughter," he said.

AT THE hearing, a petition filed by Margaret Barr of Fenton, Shepard's sister and the personal representative for the estate, will also be reviewed.

In that petition, Barr claims she

learned that John Balzick of West Bloomfield and his wife, Marguerite, removed cash and other assets from Shepard's home the day that he died.

According to the petition, the Balzicks "removed from the residence of the deceased cash estimated to be at least \$50,000, together with jewelry, including diamonds and other items."

The petition also claims that Marguerite Balzick "turned over time certificates and like items she could not

boils down to service. It doesn't cost anything. If you have good service, you have more than enough customers."

And the way Anne and Bob make sure ABC provides the right service to the area's customers starts with the drivers they hire.

"We're very selective with the drivers," said Anne, who is the company's official owner. "We take this seriously. I won't select a driver if I, a woman alone, am afraid to go with them."

When first hired, the 12 drivers, including one woman, received a letter from Anne listing the rules and requirements of the job. A shirt and tie is one of the first rules. Use of drugs and alcohol is strictly forbidden. If the Clarks come across a driver who

Please turn to Page 7

Crime dips in Hills

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Although Farmington Hills police responded to more complaints and incidents in 1984, the area experienced 167 fewer serious crimes than in the previous year.

The 5.6 percent decrease in serious crimes is especially good when many of the surrounding communities experienced increases in serious crimes in 1984, said Debbie DeSilvio, supervisor of the Hills' police records.

In 1984, 2,794 serious crimes were reported compared to 2,951 in 1983, according to the Hills' annual crime statistics.

"I think it's a combination of several things," Sgt. Richard Murphy of the Hills juvenile division said about reasons for the drop in serious crimes. "It isn't just one thing."

What's happened in the last year is a serious effort in controlling crime in the city, Murphy said. The effort involved all divisions of the police department, including surveillance, crime prevention, detective juvenile divisions.

The patrol division made extensive arrests during the year, and both the juvenile and detective divisions have been doing very well in their investigations, he said.

"It's just been a real joint effort within the department," Murphy said. Whenever police are called to a residence or business on a breaking and entering complaint, for example, the officers explain how to better protect property from vandalism and other crimes, Murphy said.

In addition, "Citizens are starting to report (crimes) more now than before," Murphy added.

OF SERIOUS crimes committed in 1984, the greatest decrease was seen in robbery with 29 incidents in 1984 compared to 34 in 1983. Decreases of more than 8 percent followed in incidents of aggravated assault, burglary and larceny.

While the total number of serious crimes decreased, auto thefts and forcible rapes increased.

In 1984, auto thefts totaled 376 compared to 318 in 1983. Rapes increased from six in 1983 to nine in 1984.

As far as preventing rapes, Murphy said residents, particularly women, must learn "not to be so trusting; and" to "be cognizant of where they are."

Please turn to Page 7

Hidden past unveiled after death of renowned city council watcher

By Julie Brown
staff writer

The congenial, soft-spoken city hall watcher who died last October has become the center of a court case involving his nearly \$200,000 estate. Oakland County Probate Judge Eugene A. Moore has set a Tuesday, March 5, hearing date for reviewing the estate of Lison Shepard.

The March 5 hearing will be held to review a petition filed by Marcella J. Catto, Catto of Euclid, Ohio, claims to be Shepard's daughter from a common law marriage.

Shepard was well known in the community as an observer of the political scene. He frequently was seen at political functions and often at Farmington Hills city hall. He was best known for his "battle of the easement" with Councilman Charles Williams. Shepard's and Williams' property abutted. Both claimed ownership of the easement.

A modest dresser, few persons expected he was worth the \$197,000 listed as assets in the court suit. Neither did they realize he had a daughter.

The petition was filed "for determination of heirs," according to Catto's attorney, Kenneth Morris of Livonia.

"Apparently, when the original petition was filed, she wasn't listed as a daughter," he said.

AT THE hearing, a petition filed by Margaret Barr of Fenton, Shepard's sister and the personal representative for the estate, will also be reviewed.

In that petition, Barr claims she

learned that John Balzick of West Bloomfield and his wife, Marguerite, removed cash and other assets from Shepard's home the day that he died.

According to the petition, the Balzicks "removed from the residence of the deceased cash estimated to be at least \$50,000, together with jewelry, including diamonds and other items."

The petition also claims that Marguerite Balzick "turned over time certificates and like items she could not

Please turn to Page 7

what's inside

- Community Calendar . . . 6B
- Editorials 6A
- Inside Angles 3A
- Oral Quarrel 6A
- Cable Connection 6A
- Shopping Cart 6A
- Suburban Life 5, 6, 7B
- Sports Section C
- NEWSLINE 477-5450
- CLASSIFIED ADS. 591-0900
- HOME DELIVERY . 591-0900



RECRUITMENT
HELP WANTED
Classified Advertising
Begins in SECTION C
of today's paper.