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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Is it real or . . . ?

Whether a fire is for real or just a practice run, the drama can be nearly as great and just as dangerous. To see how the Farmington

Hills firefighters keep their skills sharp, turn to page 3A

Plan it, save it or forget it

By Steve Barnaby editor

To prepare Farmington's downtown business district for the future it will take the cooperation of local residents, merchants, professionals and building owners.

That's what more than 70 persons crowded into Farmington City Hall this week last for a meeting.

"We have to realize that unless we change, we will deteriorate," the planner told the audience composed of council members, planning commissioners, historical commission members and residents.

Wzacy recommended that a citizens committee be developed to work in conjunction with planners to develop a strategy to revamp downtown — The Grand River/Farmington Road shopping area.

"This isn't meant to be a baby-sitting service or social club," he said, assuring residents that some results could be garnered in as short a time as four to six months.

But the largest part of the work could take as long as two or more years, he said.

The city must begin to analyze and to identify the opportunities that downtown Farmington offers in the face of a changing marketplace.

"Other people are competing. Many other centers of activities are trying to gain the market," he said.

"What is needed is a response from the community to establish continuity."

The success of any plan developed, Wzacy stressed, was dependent on cooperation between the private and public sectors.

"The developer must contribute to downtown, but the city must have a sense of understanding of what the developer needs. Don't get bogged down in red tape," he warned.

The presentation was made at the

best of City Manager Robert Deadman, who noted that it's been a decade since the last business plan was outlined for the downtown area.

"It is time to take another look. What are we going to be like in the 1990s?" said Deadman.

Both Deadman and Wzacy reviewed the mercantile climate over the past 10 years, noting such developments as Tally Hall, Twelve-Oaks, the change in consumer shopping preferences and the impact these changes have on the downtown Farmington scene.

"CONSUMER ATTITUDES have changed," said Wzacy. "Different goods are now packaged differently."

He noted the impact that factory direct sales, and off brand stores have had on the market. He also stressed the role of the changing lifestyle.

Because 85 percent of women now work outside the home, entire new industries are developing. Families live differently and they also shop in a different manner, he noted.

Wzacy threw out a few pointers on what any future committee would be looking at during its tenure.

"We must have a recognition of the changes and a reorientation of the downtown. That involves the training and retraining of downtown merchants," he said.

Security was another important concern to be studied.

"Farmington is in great shape. But you must have a sense of security and safety. You never have enough of it."

The committee also would have to analyze the possibility of bringing in businesses which would attract persons from a wider area. Called "destination market places" in planning parlance, Wzacy used the Tally Hall complex as one example where persons from miles around come just to shop.

Council will consider formation of the recommended committee at a future council session.

Council emerges from secret meeting with unanimous vote on legal beagle

By Julie Brown staff writer

Farmington Hills City Council members voted unanimously Monday to extend the contract of the city's attorney through the end of the year.

Council members met in a closed session Monday to discuss the city's legal services. They met in closed session to discuss the matter Feb. 19, but took no action at that meeting.

Paul Bibeau's firm, Brennan, Bibeau and Pochman, represents the city.

"We'd had long talks with Mr. Bibeau and felt there was room for change and improvement," Mayor Jan Dolan said Tuesday. "I think some council members were unhappy with the firm as it is presently constituted. The majority felt there are some areas of concern.

"We would like to see changes" the mayor said. "Just some staffing changes (within the firm) the council felt they would be happier with."

Council members voted to review the firm's performance no later than Dec. 2.

"We will see how they perform and consider any extension," said Joe Alkateeb, mayor pro tem.

"I think that was just fine," he said of Monday's decision. "I like the idea of pursuing interviews and evaluation of other firms." Periodic reviews of the city's consultants will be beneficial, Alkateeb said.

"THIS WAY, I think we will be doing the job best."

"It was, in my opinion, the best feasible resolution to the problem," council

member Joan Dudley said. "Knowing what the choices are, to me that was the best way to vote."

"You have to choose the one that either represents what you want, or comes the closest," Dudley said. "When you work with a group, you have to know when to give and when to hold tight. I think the really telling time will be in December."

The review of the city's attorney followed a council decision to look at consultant services. The city also has consultants for planning (Vilcan-Leman and Associates Inc.) and for engineering (Pate, Hirm and Bogue).

"This was kind of a learning opportunity for us," Dolan said. "You learn on the first one."

"You should have a periodic in-depth review, and plan for it, which we had

not been doing. There was never really an in-depth review done of them. I think the city will be better because of it."

On Feb. 12, Bibeau's law firm and several others with municipal experience made presentations to the council.

"It was a great education for us as a council," the meeting allowed council members to see what services other firms provide, Dolan said.

"I'm not saying it's better or worse, it's different. At least you're thinking about it."

"WE WILL be sitting down and talking with our consultants," Dolan said. "I know in industry they have reviews. We're initiating it, to see where it goes from here."

Drive launched to make grad night drunk free

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

It's rolling around to that time of year again when proms and graduation parties become a big part of high school life.

And that generally means that drinking and consequently drinking and driving also become a big part of high school life.

But students won't be alone in trying to deal with these potentially fatal problems.

Television stations WTWS-Channel 56 and WDIV-Channel 4 have joined forces to encourage and remind both students and parents to avoid drinking and driving during the big high school party season.

"We're hoping to change the environment so that students won't feel it's necessary to have an alcoholic graduation," said Agnes Scott, vice president for special projects at Channel 56.

Project Graduation seems out of a coalition of preventive substance abuse groups that developed soon after Channel 56 aired a national awareness program in 1983 called "The Chemical People."

While Channel 56 is the coordinating agency for the five-county Project Graduation, Scott said organizations such as MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers), and SADD (Students Against Driving Drunk), Channel 4, area radio stations and civic organizations are lending their support.

So far the intermediate school districts in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties are participating, Scott said.

Monroe and Washtenaw intermediate school districts are also expected to participate.

Project Graduation is attempting to keep graduation and prom time safe and free from fatalities, Scott said. The idea is similar to the media blitz during the recent New Year's Eve celebration, she said.

"Nobody was killed," she said. Project Graduation is a two-pronged effort highlighting alcohol-free prom and graduation activities and safe driving.

THE FIRST PHASE will be a full-day workshop April 23 at Roma's in Livonia. More than 1,000 students from the five-county area are expected to participate. The workshop will include "motivational speakers" and reports from students on "good activities" for graduation, Scott said.

"So kids will go away with ideas to keep graduation safe," she said.

The second aspect of Project Graduation involves a strong media campaign including Channel 4 and other media.

The idea the media will be pushing, Scott said, is: "Have a good alcohol-free graduation and stay alive."

In addition, Channel 4 will be publishing in the metropolitan newspapers a pledge for parents and students to sign agreeing to help make graduation safe and alcohol free.

If a senior class, for example, in one of the participating schools gets 50 percent of the families to sign the pledges, Channel 4 will put these families on an honor roll, Scott said.

"The home parties are the worst. What we're trying to do is get the pressure off so parents can't be conned into believing everyone is doing it (serving liquor at home parties)."

"The lists of pledges will be published so kids can't say to their parents everyone is serving booze at their parties."

A big part of Project Graduation is to get "people to care" about each other, Scott said.

Although the health-conscious attitude of most young people may help to cut down the drinking and consequently the driving efforts such as SADD are working to get students, particularly the "cool" students to get involved in promoting alcohol-free activities and safe driving, Scott said.

"We have to get the power people in the schools involved — the jocks and cool crowd," she said. "Not until these kids do it will it have an effect."

Super thinkers get limelight

By Judith Doner Berne staff writer

As part of the local, state and national press toward educational excellence, the Observer and Eccentric will name its first Academic All-Stars in early May.

A committee of Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, co-sponsor of the O&E Academic All-Stars, will use test scores and grade averages to select 12 high school students from the communities served by the Eccentric newspapers and 12 from the area served by Observer newspapers.

Their profiles and photographs will appear in the May 2 issue. Each will receive a certificate of recognition.

Nominating forms were mailed last week to principals of the 53 public, private and parochial high schools in

school districts serving Rochester, Rochester Hills, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township, West Bloomfield, Troy, Southfield, Farmington and Farmington Hills, Lathrup Village, Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Redford, Westland and Garden City.

They are due Friday, March 29.

EACH PRINCIPAL will nominate two students — they may be juniors or seniors — whose combined grade point average plus national test scores rank the highest in their school.

Grade points will be determined only by academic subjects — math, English, science, social studies and foreign language. Test scores must be the PSAT test for juniors and either the SAT or ACT for seniors.

oral quarrel

How do we stop teens from driving drunk?

Drunk driving is a teen's enemy. With prom and graduation season rolling around, attention is on making this time safe and alcohol-free for high school students.

With Project Graduation 1985, WTWS-Channel 56 and WDIV-Channel 4 are working to get the message across to high school students that graduation parties can be fun without alcohol.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: How can parents, teachers and fellow students stop young people from drinking and driving? How would you change attitudes?

To answer this question, call 477-5495 before 1 p.m. Friday. Look in Monday's paper to see how your neighbors responded to this issue.

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