



Farmington Observer

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Farmington FOCUS

If you have a news item, feature story idea or an action picture with a Farmington area connection, send a note to our downtown office at 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

NEWS and views about the year ahead will be spotlighted during the annual State of Cities Breakfast at 8 a.m. Thursday, March 27.

The breakfast will be held at Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co., 33045 Hamilton Blvd., Farmington Hills.

Leaders of both Farmington and Farmington Hills will speak. Call the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce by March 26 for reservations: 474-3440.

IF YOU see shamrocks adorning the walls of your favorite local bar, pub or restaurant, there's a good chance they were brought through the Farmington Area Jaycees Shamrock Sale.

Proceeds from the sale of shamrocks for \$1 go to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

To help promote shamrock sales, call the Jaycee Hotline: 477-JCIS.

NO more travelling. Farmington school board members will no longer rotate their meetings at various schools throughout the district, as has been the policy for the past 15 years.

The board voted Tuesday to hold their meetings at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, 32500 Shilawasse, Farmington, unless the need arises to have one elsewhere.

Trustees cited additional heating costs, extra work for school custodial staffs, and inaccessibility to administrative records at the central office as reasons for no longer rotating meetings.

FARMINGTON school board members also were in agreement Tuesday on another matter.

They approved a consent agenda for future board meetings.

The new agenda item will group several topics — such as personnel, bid approvals and gift acceptances — at each meeting, requiring only one board resolution vote.

The board president and superintendent will decide which items will be placed on the consent agenda, and which items will require further discussion and an individual resolution vote.

STATE Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, was among the lawmakers who took part in "Cherry Sundae on Wednesday" activities Feb. 19 at the State Capitol, Lansing.

During the day, a Senate Concurrent Resolution was presented to cherry industry leaders.

FOOTNOTES: Royal Aldrich, a native of Farmington, N.Y., built the Aldrich House, a two-story Greek Revival farmhouse at the northeast corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake, about 1840.

Aldrich's father, Essek, bought the 320-acre site from the U.S. government in 1823. But Essek never lived there. He "sold the property to Royal, who settled here in 1835," reads the Farmington Hills Historical Commission marker in front of the house.

"The house retains its original clapboard siding, interior woodwork, doors and hardware. It is supported by 14 1/2-inch, walnut beams and a cobblestone basement foundation."

Theater survives changing lifestyle

By Casey Hans staff writer

Movie stars surrounded E. Gregory Hohler during his childhood years.

He spent much of his boyhood at Farmington's Civic Theatre — either operated or owned by his family throughout its 45-year history. "I've been working here since I was two inches high," the current community theater owner said.

Gene are the days of the carbon lamphouse projectors and the "Christmas wrapping-type" of wallpaper. "This used to be a 1920s showplace — decorated with a lot of flair," Hohler explained.

It was replaced with computerized projection equipment and a complete theater remodeling in November 1984 to create a "homey little environment" that's more up-to-date, Hohler said.

Posters and a collection of colorful plates from classic movies adorn the lobby and halls of the historic theater.

THE SMELL of popcorn, the crunch of empty candy boxes during theater cleanup, and Friday and Saturday crowds are not lingering memories for Hohler. They're a very real part of a present-day business he always wanted to be involved with.

"This was always my love — I always wanted to run the theater," Hohler said.

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"This used to be a 1920s showplace — decorated with a lot of flair," Farmington Civic Theatre owner E. Gregory Hohler says.

Cities wary because of TIFA battle

By Casey Hans staff writer

State-level officials fear litigation by two Oakland County school districts over tax increment financing issues may halt municipal growth statewide.

The threat of federal and state program budget cuts added to this may cause even larger problems. "There are a number of things (affecting municipalities), none of which look good," according to Michigan Municipal League Associate Director William Davis.

"This is the unfortunate icing on the cake."

Farmington Public Schools filed suit Feb. 12 in Oakland County Circuit Court to halt the implementation of a Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA) along the 12 Mile corridor in Farmington Hills.

A suit was also filed recently by Birmingham Public Schools against the Village of Beverly Hills to halt the use of tax increment financing in a Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

Both districts are represented by Birmingham attorney Dennis Pollard of Clark, Hardy, Lewis, Pollard and Page.

OFFICIALS AT the Michigan Department of Education are surveying districts statewide to determine the extent of tax increment financing's effect, according to Thomas Wagamon, associate superintendent for finance.

"We're trying to get a handle on the situation," he said, noting the Oakland County litigation is a "policy issue at the local level."

"It obviously could have an impact on schools statewide."

Davis called opposing school districts "short-sighted" and "myopic" in

'Either everybody works together in a community to help development, or everything comes to a screeching halt.'

— William Davis, associate director, Michigan Municipal League

their views opposing the use of tax increment financing in an authority (TIFA) or in a DDA. "Either everybody works together in a community to help development in the long term, or everything comes to a screeching halt," he added.

Meanwhile, attorneys for Farmington Hills and Farmington Public Schools have agreed to extend the deadline for the city's response to that district's lawsuit. City Attorney Paul Bibeau requested an extension of up to 30 days, which was agreed upon, according to Pollard.

The Hills City Council met in executive session with their attorneys March 3 to review the four-count complaint, which called for a legal response by March 6. "The matter needs further review," said William Costick, Hills city manager.

The tax increment financing issue began several years ago, and was primarily raised by out-of-formula school districts such as Farmington, officials said.

ACCORDING TO Section 26 of the School Aid Act, in-formula districts —

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DDA president upbeat about future

By Bob Sklar staff writer

Harry Wingerter's hooked on downtown.

"Like babies, we're learning to walk. But things will begin to happen now that we have an organization with some meat to it," says Wingerter, president of Farmington's newly formed Downtown Development Authority and a charter merchant in the 75-year-old Downtown Farmington Center.

"We had some bad times when Federal's went out in the late '70s, but things have improved and I'm getting more excited each day," the Bon Ton Shoppe owner said.

The intent of a DDA is to prevent deterioration, promote economic growth, increase property values, bolster the commercial base and strengthen merchant ties. The idea behind a DDA is for public improvements to inspire private investments.

Farmington's 64-acre downtown development district is home to 150 businesses and offices plus several residences.

In one of its first official acts, the DDA authorized the city manager to prepare a draft development plan.

"The plan must take into account previous plans, the immediately concluded (Farmington Futures Program) study by planner Christopher Wazny and marketing specialist Nick Nicholas, and the shopping list of the Downtown Farmington Development Committee's task forces," said Robert Schultz, Deadman's administrative aide.

WINGERTER ENVISIONS Deadman's draft to be "a framework of all these presentations."

"Then," Wingerter said, "the DDA will meet and put priorities on them. It's a little difficult for me to come up with one particular priority — lighting, an inn, or whatever."

"Right now," he added, "we're anxious to get organized and put firm plans together. We want to see something happen. There have been a lot of plans before, but which have just sat on the table."

'Things will begin to happen now that we have an organization with some meat to it.'

— Harry Wingerter DDA president

AT ITS organizational meeting Wednesday, the nine-member DDA elected Farmington Civic owner E. Gregory Hohler vice president and City Manager Robert Deadman secretary. City Treasurer Patsy Cantrell will serve as DDA treasurer.

Other DDA members are Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce executive director JoAnn Soronen, Farmington Insurance Agency owner Frank Clappison, Downtown Farmington Center owner Larry Lechner, Metropolitan National Bank president Robert Heinrich, Farmington attorney Ronald Oglesby and resident Richard Donner.

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As the council approaches its 50th anniversary celebration in 1987, Cohan called for "a long-range plan to set the course for the rest of the century." This includes working with the Black, Hispanic and Arab communities in the Detroit area, he said.

"Our citizenship pays us back in fellowship, brotherhood and joy," the 59-year-old senator declared, discussing the country's civil rights accomplishments. "We also remember how we all shared the triumph and how it unlocked our hearts."

Hart called the Metro-Detroit council "a bulwark against anti-Semitism"

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Harry Wingerter, in his Bon Ton Shoppe in Downtown Farmington.

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Hart talks of a new vision

By Casey Hans staff writer

Criticizing the Reagan administration's "standing tall" philosophy, U.S. Sen. Gary Hart called Thursday for the "recapture of a brave and triumphant spirit" in the vein of this country's 18th-century civil rights movement.

Sounding like a presidential candidate — although not yet declared one — the Colorado Democrat flew into town to speak to about 150 members and guests of the Delegate Assembly of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit.

His speech followed the assembly's quarterly business meeting at the Adat

Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills. Extreme cold weather and icy road conditions apparently lessened the crowd from 500-600 organizers expected.

"It's much too early to be talking about national politics," Hart told reporters before the speech, when asked about a firm commitment to run in the 1988 presidential race.

But the Democratic party "feels it wants to and must carry Michigan" in 1988, Hart said.

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