



Farmington Observer

Volume 100 Number 55 Thursday, April 13, 1989 Farmington, Michigan 100 Pages Twenty-Five Cents

farmington FOCUS

To write the Observer: 32303 Grand River, Farmington 48024. To call news line, 477-5450; sports line, 591-5312; home delivery, 591-6500; classified ads, 591-6900; display ads, 591-2300; fax line, 477-9722.

MOMENT to clarify. Farmington school board president clarified the Public Inquiries and Comments portion of the agenda (Item 5) April 4. Board meetings are held to conduct the "business of this school district," he said. "Board meetings are not a public forum. Item 5 is for citizens who wish to air a problem. But please, make your remarks in a constructive and courteous manner." He asked speakers to direct questions to the superintendent and his staff during the workday, not during board meetings. "The board of education is under no obligation to respond or take action this evening," he said.

DID you know Farmington has grown by 67 residents in the last decade while Farmington Hills has grown by 11,000? By 2005, the two cities are expected to have 94,000 residents, up from 79,000 today, according to Farmington Mayor Richard Tupper.

Quote of the week
"At first, I thought somebody had flicked a penny really hard at my chest. It really stung and made me lose a little bit of grip."
— swimmer Michael Knuerr. Hit by a bullet that sailed through the pool window during gunfire outside Mercy Center Sunday (see story this page).

what's inside

- Business 1C
- Cable connection 6C
- Classifieds Sec. C,F,H
- Index 3G
- Auto Sec. C,H
- Real estate Sec. E,G
- Employment Sec. G,H
- Creative living 1E
- Crossword puzzle 8E
- Opinion 12A
- Points of view 13A
- Police/fire calls 14A
- Recreation news 13C
- Sports 1B
- Suburban life 1B

HOME & GARDEN

SPECIAL SECTION
INTODAY'S ISSUE

Shootout draws inquiry from FBI

What prompted the gunfire, 4A

By Bob Ktkar staff writer



Farmington Hills officer Thomas Shlvack (background, with stung) and two Livonia officers check the woods off Belfast, west of Middlebelt, for two men suspected of attempted robbery at Mercy Center Sunday afternoon.

There are similarities between the Farmington Hills robbery and the shooting of a coin dealer in 1987 at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, but the incidents "are not necessarily connected," FBI special agent John Anthony said Tuesday.

The coin dealer shot two years ago was hit in the leg but later died of his injury, no charges were ever brought. The FBI will determine if similarities also exist between the Farmington Hills robbery and other coin dealer robberies in Michigan or nationwide, Anthony said. FBI agents and Farmington Hills police seized evidence during a search of a room at the DeLido Motel, at Eight Mile and Woodward in Detroit, early Monday. The men charged in Farmington Hills had been staying there. Arraigned late Monday before District Judge Michael Hand of Farmington, Nani Ashah Butris, 19, of Detroit, and Michael Allen Weaver, 40, of Madison Heights, stood mute to charges of armed robbery and possessing a firearm while committing a felony. Butris also was charged with assault with intent to murder. Innocent pleas were entered in their behalf. They were remanded to the Oakland County Jail in lieu of \$100,000 cash or surety bond pending a pre-arrest conference April 19 in 47th District Court. Weaver has prior convictions in Mount Clemens for murder and armed robbery, police said.

A ROSEVILLE teenager about to climb out of the Mercy Center pool Sunday was cut when one of three bullets fired by the masked gunman pierced the pool window and bounced off his chest. Michael Knuerr, 15, was on the pool ladder during lifeguard training when he heard a bang, then felt something hit his chest. As the Fraser High freshman looked down, he saw something fall into the pool. He dove in, recovered a spent slug and gave it to the lifeguard, who gave it to a security guard. "At first, I thought somebody had flicked a penny really hard at my chest," Knuerr said. "It really stung and made me lose a little bit of grip." "But by the time I got out, my chest was stinging and red. It was then I realized it was a bullet. I thought maybe some crazy was just out there shooting at windows. I didn't find out what really happened until the police got there." No one else was hurt by the gunfire, which broke out at 5:05 p.m., after the close of a coin, stamp and baseball card show at Mercy Center,



Michael Allen Weaver stood mute



Nani Ashah Butris stood mute

11 Mile and Middlebelt. About 400 visitors attended the 56-dealer show, run by Edward Muszynski of Vi's Stamp Service in Farmington Hills. The gunman, armed with a Uzi semiautomatic pistol, was after \$40,000 worth of rare coins in the back of the coin dealer's van, parked in Mercy Center's east lot, police said.

THE SUSPECTS were arrested about 5:35 p.m., after bailing out of their car on Albion, a dead-end street southwest of Grand River and Middlebelt. Officers from Farmington Hills, Farmington, Livonia and Detroit had surrounded the area. An off-duty Detroit police inspec-

Fairness leads official's agenda

By Casey Hans staff writer

Newly appointed Farmington Hills councilman Paul Sowerby got right to work Monday, challenging developers, asking questions of city administrators and pledging to be fair. "I have worked very hard to gain this honor," he said, after being sworn in at the start of Monday's meeting. "It's a special day for me." Sowerby said he will "encourage diversity and deliberation" and added that he has "no identifiable constituents, no secret alliances, and no hidden agenda." The former chairman of the city's Zoning Board of Appeals, Sowerby was appointed March 27 to fill the term of councilman Joe Alkateeb who resigned his seat in February.

Please turn to Page 6



First-term councilman Aldo Vagnozzi (right) welcomes sworn-in councilman Paul Sowerby at the Farmington Hills City Council meeting Monday night.

4 candidates file for board race

Claronville and Walled Lake filings, 6A

By Casey Hans staff writer

Two incumbents and two challengers will compete for two seats on the Farmington school board Monday, June 12. John Akouri and Robert Ranney will challenge incumbents John Cotton and Helen Ditchay for the four-year terms. The two winners will serve on the non-partisan, seven-member board. Akouri said he has the support of several community leaders, including members of the Farmington Area Republican Club and its president, Patrick Anderson, who has been critical of the school board in recent months. Akouri is running because he feels

he has grass-roots support. "Just last year, I took a deep interest in the school board," Akouri said. "If the voters of the community want me in there, maybe it's time for a change." Akouri said he is forming a committee of supporters who will "decide what direction we want to go. Our main goal is to win a seat on the board." THE OTHER newcomer, Ranney, chose to run after school trustees voted in March to give siblings enrollment preference at the Highmeadow Common Campus alternative elementary school, instead of allowing an open, districtwide lottery selection. "Highmeadow is a symptom of the reason," Ranney said. "I saw a group of elected officials capitulate to a special interest group. To me that's



"When we became aware of it, we had signs posted and ran the water every morning."
— Lynn Nutter, school official

Drinking water safe — schools

By Casey Hans staff writer

Following federal reports this week that water in school drinking fountains may contain hazardous amounts of lead, Farmington school officials are assuring residents here that their children are safe. Farmington Public Schools completed a study of all drinking fountains in school buildings in March. The study showed the district well below guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency, according to assistant superintendent Lynn Nutter. Since the EPA study was released this week, the district has received calls from concerned parents, Nutter said. The district became aware of the possible lead risk last year, and be-

gan immediate action. "When we became aware of it, we had signs posted and ran the water every morning," Nutter said. SIGNS WARNING of possible lead problems were put above drinking fountains, and custodial staffs ran water each day, which is one EPA recommendation for removing any lead contamination from the water. The district then took a sampling of water at two school buildings, showing no lead problem. A more thorough study of water in all buildings was completed March 23, just weeks before the EPA study was released. Nutter said any recorded levels in Farmington were "far below" the EPA guidelines, which say a

Please turn to Page 2