

# Richardson elected city's 1st woman mayor

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

Shirley Richardson will go down in Farmington history books as the first woman to be mayor. She was unanimously elected by fellow council members Monday night.

The 29-year resident said she's ready for the challenge. She'll serve a two-year term as mayor and four-year term on the council.

"I'll probably wake up tomorrow morning and realize that I'm mayor," said Richardson after the hour-long council meeting Monday.

"I'm looking forward to the experience and using some of my leadership skills as mayor. Little did I know at the last council meeting that I would be sitting in the mayor's

chair at the following council meeting. I thought, maybe, I would have two years to prepare for it. But I do look forward to serving my community and I am willing to make a lot of personal sacrifices to do the best job that I can."

Richardson, 52, was top vote-getter in the Nov. 7 general election. She was appointed to her position three years ago to fill a vacancy created by Alton Bennett's resignation.

Veteran councilman Ralph Yoder was elected mayor pro-tem. Richardson's husband, John, was present to cheer her on.

"I'd like to commend the council for its selection of mayor," he said. "She has a reputation for selecting a forceful mayor and you certainly have upheld that tradition."

AN AIR of joviality filled the room.

"Is this guy going to come to all the council meetings?" council watcher Nancy Leonard quipped. "I was accused by (former mayor) Richard Tupper of having somebody come in and raise the seat, but I assure you I had nothing to do with it," Shirley Richardson joked at the start of the meeting.

Some council members, along with her husband, oohed when she hit the gavel to begin the meeting.

"See, I told you she was a forceful mayor," John Richardson said.

Another precedent-setter, who just happens to be female, is JoAnne McShane, 43, who joined Richardson as the first woman to be elected to the council. McShane came in third, ahead of four-year incumbent Ar-

nold Campbell, former mayor pro-tem.

Campbell, deeply disappointed and disheartened by the election outcome, was not present Monday.

McShane said she has earned the additional title of "councilmom" by her son, Kelly, 22. "It felt great," she said of her first council meeting. "I'm thrilled to serve the people. I want to do a good job."

The council also appointed McShane to the planning commission for the duration of her two-year council term.

At the start of the council meeting, city clerk Jo Bushey swore in the three newly elected council members: Richardson, Tupper and McShane. Tupper will join Richardson in serving a four-year term.



RANDY BORGST/staff photographer

Shirley Richardson was elected Farmington's first woman mayor Monday night.

# Police investigate alleged sexual assault at school

A Kenbrook Elementary School employee was temporarily removed from the school after a student accused him of sexually assaulting her Nov. 9 — the second such allegation in a Farmington elementary school this month.

An 11-year-old girl at Kenbrook said a male employee sexually assaulted her twice the morning of Nov. 9, Farmington Hills police said. The school is at 32130 Bonnet Hill, in the 13 Mile-Orchard Lake Road area.

"We're actively investigating," Sgt. Charles Nebus said. "We've interviewed the victim and are inter-

viewing other staff members present at the school at the time."

On Nov. 3, an employee at Wooddale Elementary — in the 13 Mile-Farmington Road area — was temporarily removed from the school after a student accused him of sexually assaulting her. That investigation is continuing, Nebus said.

The incidents are "totally unrelated and very different," said Sgt. Zurvallec, Farmington Public Schools employee relations director.

The employees have not been identified. Police are not releasing details of the accusations.

IN LIGHT of the Wooddale allegation, Farmington Public Schools sent

a letter home to elementary school parents on Nov. 16, assuring them

"the Farmington schools provide safe and secure environments for children to learn."

Neither employee has been charged with anything, Zurvallec stressed, and the allegations are being thoroughly investigated, independently, by the schools, the police and Oakland County Protective Services.

The employees are receiving full pay, Zurvallec said. Temporary removal is not a disciplinary measure but rather a precaution for the employee and the school involved.

The Nov. 16 letter to parents notes

that "when there is a serious allegation of child abuse against an employee," district policy calls for removing "that employee from the building pending the outcome of any investigation."

"While not implying guilt or innocence, this action is taken to protect all involved."

The letter adds that "Farmington schools have an ongoing relationship with the police and protective services and involve them not only in suspected abuse cases, as the law requires, but also in programs presented in our schools for children and parents."

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— Sgt. Charles Nebus  
Farmington Hills police

# 9-year-old girl dies in poolside accident

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Monica was swimming in the 10-foot-deep end of the six-lane pool just before she climbed out at 11:40 p.m. Saturday, police said.

A swimming instructor found her lying on the pool's north deck, conscious but gasping for air. "He administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and we called for emergency help," Bush said.

PARAMEDICS TOOK Monica to Botsford, where she was pronounced dead at 12:10 a.m. Sunday, Farmington Hills police said.

Two youngsters told police they saw Monica appear to hit her head on the side of the pool moments before she climbed out and slipped and fell to the deck.

The Y, however, couldn't immediately confirm that Monica hit her head, Bush said.

The "sleeping bag" sleepover involved 32 children in grades 1-5. They were supervised by three staff members and two youth volunteers, Bush said.

Sleepover activities typically include gym and court games, a 30-minute swim, refreshments and a video before the lights go out by 1 a.m., he said.

John Strand, a family friend, said Monica and her brother, Dennis, 11, an Eagle fifth grader, have attended 5-6 sleepovers over the past two years.

Strand said Monica's mother, Mary, "holds nothing against the Y and hopes the sleepovers are continued."

"She feels they're a great way for kids to have fun, to enjoy themselves, to get out and meet other kids and to do something different," Strand said.

FRANK KASUN, Eagle principal, called Monica "a beautiful young lady. She was very caring and a good student."

He said the school learned of Monica's death late Monday morning. "It came out of the blue. The whole day was a downer after that," Kasun said. "The news was very disheartening."

The school will send a letter to parents advising them of the tragedy and the funeral arrangements, Kasun said.

Teachers and the school social worker met Tuesday "to discuss how best to let children share in the grief," he said.

SERVICES WERE set for Wednesday at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, Birmingham. "She responded to love and liked to give love," said Pastor Ray Scherbarth. "She particularly enjoyed being with her friends."

He said Monica was "very much a part of our family." She attended Our Shepherd Lutheran Christian Day School in Birmingham from preschool through the second grade. She also attended Sunday School.

Family members described Monica as an avid writer.

In addition to her mother, Dennis is survived by one brother, Dennis, and her grandparents, Rembert Orłowski, Dolores Orłowski and Winifred Findlay.

Burial was to be at White Chapel Cemetery, Troy.



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