

Farmington Observer



VOLUME 104 NUMBER 99

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1993 • FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 80 PAGES

FIFTY CENTS

(199) Suburban Communications Corporation

IN THE PAPER

TODAY

Top volunteer: Mike Durkee, an 82-year-old Farmington Hills resident who helps feed the needy, was honored for his good deeds. /11A

Troubled trail: Plans for a trail through the commons area of a Farmington Hills subdivision have led to a spirited debate. /13A

COUNTY NEWS

Togetherness: Detroit City Council President Maryann Mahaffey tells a suburban senior women's club that more cooperation is needed between city and suburb. /5A

OPINION

Be our guest: Guest columnists have livened up the Observer's Points of View pages. There's always room for more. /14A

More on state and schools: Guest columnist David York says we should stand up to state legislators. /15A

SPORTS

Cross country: Farmington's four girls teams expect to be competitive, if not championship contenders. /1B

Girls basketball: Farmington's public school teams resumed play Tuesday with non-league games. /1B

ENTERTAINMENT



Movie review: "Kalifornia" is an exciting suspense thriller with plenty of energy. /6B

SUBURBAN LIFE

Publisher's escort: Farmington Hills resident Shirley Carp escorts visiting authors, including California resident Naomi Epel, who is originally from West Bloomfield. /1C

INDEX

Building Scene . . . 1F
Business . . . 9-10B
Classifieds . . . E-G
Auto . . . F-G
Employment . . . F-G
Real estate . . . F-G
Creative Living . . . 1D
Crossword . . . 7E
Entertainment . . . 5-8B
Obituaries . . . 8A
Opinion . . . 14-15A
Police, fire calls . . . 6A
Personal Scene . . . 7G

HERE'S HOW TO REACH US

Newsroom: 477-5450
Newsroom Fax: 477-9722
Sports: 553-2141
Reader Comment Line: 853-2042
Classified Advertising: 591-0900
Display Advertising: 591-2300
Home Delivery: 591-0500
Cable/TV Weekly: 853-2199

Board tries town hall setting



By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Members of the Farmington Board of Education think they've found a better way to do business.

Instead of two meetings a month, the board agreed Tuesday to try and only have one — with a second informal gathering focusing on a single subject.

The second meeting would take on more of a town hall setting.

The new format kicks off 8 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 21. State Rep. Jan Dolan will discuss school finance.

The restructuring also calls for more use of the board's three-member committees, which could visit sites where issues would be discussed with the community. The committees

would then report during the regular board meetings.

"We all recognize that education and the way the board and the community does business is changing dramatically," president Cathleen Webb said. "As a board, we feel we need to be responsive to that change."

At this point, the change is experimental. Board members believe, though, it will allow for more discussion and better understanding of education issues such as finance.

More so, such an open-ended meeting would make the board more accessible to the community.

That's been a complaint, especially with people who've brought issues such as Wooddale parking lot and transportation safety before the board during regular meetings.

A similar format, though, was attempted under former Superintendent Graham Lewis.

For that reason, trustee R. Jack Inch is not sold. Inch said he's concerned there wouldn't be enough time to complete board business.

"It's been my experience on the board is the reason we have two meet-

See TOWN HALL, 9A

A scene from Oxford Estates



Sub summer: Joann Tolstedt pats Sparky, David McKecher's dog, as David and his mother, Andrea, look on.

Oxford hides the woods in the city

Stories about Farmington-area neighborhoods will appear occasionally in the Observer.

By TOM BAEZ
STAFF WRITER



Ren and Joann Tolstedt are off the map. And in the woods.

Don't bother unfolding the street map of Farmington Hills if you're trying to find your way to the Tolstedt home on Hampstead Boulevard in the Oxford Estates subdivision.

Hampstead isn't on the map, not even the official city map (1992 edition), and the only mention of Oxford Estates is a tiny box in the I-696/Drake Road area. It's labeled a condominium.

In reality, Oxford Estates isn't tiny and it isn't a condo complex. It is several streets of modern upscale homes set on manicured lawns. The woods are everywhere. It's like they plunked down a subdivision in the middle of a national forest.

"We call it our little hamlet," said Joann Tolstedt. "It's pleasing to look at. The people are friendly. It's just a neat place."
The Tolstedts didn't need a map to discover Oxford Estates two years ago.

"We were driving down the freeway (I-696) and we saw a rooftop," Joann Tolstedt said. "We said, 'Hey, there might be houses down there.'"

Oxford Estate homes are large (in the 3,300-square-foot range), pricey (\$390,000 and up) and new (since 1990).

Trees are everything

The lawns aren't especially spacious by some suburban standards, but the flower beds surround the houses. Many residents handle their own yard work.

"That's my husband's therapy," said Tolstedt. "He comes home and hits that lawn. He's noted in this sub for his lawn."

And there are the trees. Just about every house butts up to the stands of maple, oak, beech and black walnut. Trillium and wild roses seem to prosper in those woods.

People say they moved there for the woody setting.

"We wanted to build in a wooded area," said Ann Farabee, a Winchester Court resident for two years. "My husband wanted trees all around him. This is one of the last places in Farmington to do that."

Trees are everything in Oxford Estates. A lot line was changed and the course of a road altered so that a handsome old oak known as the In-

See OXFORD, 3A

City shops for new tax downtown

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Downtown Development Authority is considering a plan to maintain what it's already accomplished with a special assessment.

With the state's recent school property tax cut, the DDA loses 60 percent

of its tax increment financing revenue. Bottom line: the authority needs to replace a projected \$125,000 loss from a \$210,000 1994-95 budget.

The Farmington DDA is looking to pass an ordinance under the state's Shopping Area Redevelopment Act of 1960, which allows for a special tax assessment on commercial property

in a principal shopping district for maintenance and upkeep.

Already, there is a 2-mill levy on businesses and residences in the district; a mill is \$1 of tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. This proposed special assessment would also be translated into a mill number.

What that number will be is uncertain at this point.

"It's too early to tell," said Farmington city manager Frank Lauboff, whose office will work with the DDA to draw up the ordinance.

Such an act needs approval by the city council and requires public hear-

See DOWNTOWN, 9A

That should 'cover' it

A national makeup artist for Cover Girl Cosmetics, B.J. Gillian, will be on hand at several Detroit-area F&M stores — including the one at 31005 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills to perform makeovers and disclose some of his cosmetic application secrets.

Gillian, former model and beauty editor for the German edition of Harper's Bazaar, will be at the Farmington Hills F&M 1:30-3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 11.

Your vote counts

"My Vote Counts," a local cable TV series focusing on voting, may be viewed on MetroVision's Channel 12 at 8 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays, 2 p.m. every Thursday, and Fridays by viewer request (call Mary Conway at 563-7303).

FARMINGTON FOCUS

During September, general information regarding elections and voter registration will be presented. Host Shelley Paros will interview Kathryn Dorman, Farmington Hills city clerk.

October's show will feature an interview with dramatizations and information about the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, which allowed women to vote. Host will be Julieann Horvath.

The series is designed and presented by the Farmington Hills Committee to Increase Voter Participation.

Opinions and reactions to the shows are encouraged. Call 474-3770.

Memory Lane

From the Sept. 10, 1953, edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

Classes at Our Lady of Sorrows School opened Sept. 8 with a record enrollment — 700 students, more than 100 over last year's figure — parish officials announced. Thirteen sisters and two lay teachers handled the classes, and 15 classrooms were in use.

A new traffic light at Grand River and Middlebelt Road and cool weather were credited with the lack of traffic jams in downtown Farmington over the Labor Day weekend.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21838 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336; dropped off at the newspaper office; or faxed to 477-9722.