

Farmington Observer

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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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IN THE PAPER TODAY

March on D.C.: A Farmington Hills-based team of pompon all-stars will be part of the inaugural parade for President Clinton Monday. /A3

Saluted: Find out which Farmington Hills city employees were honored for their length and quality of service. /A3

COMMUNITY LIFE

Wide acclaim: A Farmington Hills video production company produces award-winning videos. /B1

BELIEFS & VALUES

Inter-married couples: There is help for these couples who face a host of challenges. /B5

BUSINESS

New models: Models, now known as product specialists, have changed as much as the cars over the years at the Detroit International Auto Show. /D1

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Bond vote March 25



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

With one motion, the Farmington school board trustees unanimously said bonds a way in a manner that suggests they don't think it will blow up in their faces.

The board approved submitting a bond application to the state treasury during a special meeting Monday. If approved by the state, trustees will call for an election March 25 to ask voters to OK a

\$110 million bond issue and renew the current hold-harmless millage rate.

"We have an application," board president Dave York said.

All board members' questions appear to be answered. Now it's the public's turn.

Bill Steiber already has a jump. The Farmington Hills resident continued to pepper school officials with inquiries about the bond proposal.

Steiber supports the bond, but had lingering questions about interest rates, computer equip-

ment, equity of resources, the millage renewal and how information is presented to the public. He read the voluminous financial strategies committee report, which recommends the district seek a \$110 million bond to pay for building and technological improvements.

"Are you going to put any specifics in the newspaper in the next few months so everybody can see it without going to the schools?" Steiber asked. "This is a

See BOND, A2

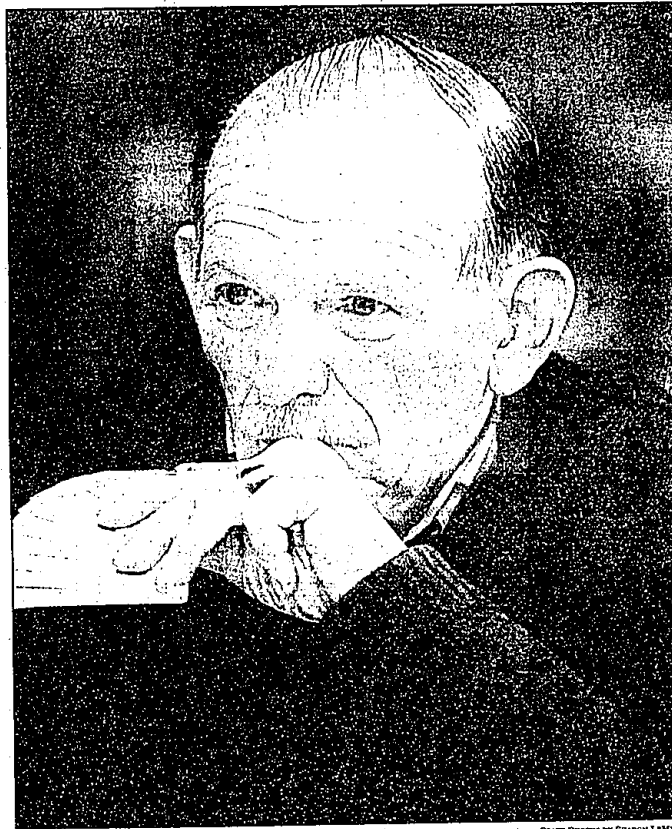


Farmington Public Schools
Proposed School Building
and Site Bonds
IMPACT OF BONDING
ALTERNATIVES ON
PROPERTY TAXPAYERS

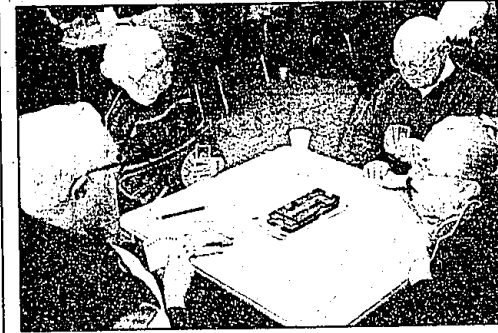
Market Value	Taxable Value	Annual Tax
\$100,000	\$100,000	Based on 2.000%
\$25,000	\$37,500	\$75
50,000	40,000	80
75,000	42,500	85
100,000	45,000	90
125,000	47,500	95
150,000	50,000	100
175,000	52,500	105
200,000	55,000	110
225,000	57,500	115
250,000	60,000	120

Source: Farmington Public Schools
Note: Taxpayer's actual tax liability is based on the actual market value of the property. The "Taxable Value" shown above is based on the market value of the property.

Student of the game



STAFF PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN LEMKE



Bridge work: Robert Lowell of Farmington Hills, above, makes brief eye contact with his partner and wife, Joan, during a bridge hand at the William Costich Senior Center at 11 Mile and Middlebelt. About 90-100 people gather every Monday afternoon for duplicate bridge. At left, Jack Meng of Farmington Hills, Ginny Sobie of Farmington Hills, Bill Ray of Farmington, and Evelyn Head of Farmington Hills share a game.

Gunmen net \$1,900 in daylight robbery

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington police are baffled by the timing and methods of a pair of an armed robbers during a heist at an oil change center Jan. 12.

Two robbers made away with more than \$1,900 during the daring hold-up at Valvolina Oil on Grand River and Mayfield shortly after 1 p.m. Sunday. No one was hurt.

Two customers were ordered out of their vehicles by a man holding a large caliber, semi-automatic gun and escorted downstairs into a restroom while one of the six employees was given a backpack and told to open the safe.

The bandits fled east on foot. Police traced footprints in the snow to a parking lot next door behind an office complex and an unoccupied home. Both men were described as wearing red bandanas with white lettering.

"There are some unusual characteristics," said Gary Goss, public safety director. "The fact that there were customers and it happened in the middle of the day. It's not your typical M.O."

Police questioned others nearby in attempt to get a description of a possible get-away vehicle, but were

See ROBBERY, A2

Hills woman loses brother, friend in plane crash

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When a Farmington Hills woman watched the television news bulletins flash on her TV screen about the crash of a commuter plane Jan. 11 in Monroe County, she responded with the same detached empathy most viewers pay to such a tragedy.

"You know how you're trying to watch a program and you'll think, 'Why can't they just limit it to one channel or something?'" said Eve "Chick" Berthiaume, whose brother Richard Stearn, 46, formerly of Livonia, was one of the 29 who died in the crash of Comair Flight 3272. "I'll never ever say that again."

When she initially heard the report, Berthiaume phoned her sis-

See CRASH, A2

Zoning board rejects Kroger; suit planned

BY WILLIAM COVANT
STAFF WRITER

A proposed Kroger shopping center was given a thumbs down Tuesday, so the developer's attorney began work on a lawsuit Wednesday.

By a 4-2 vote, the Farmington Hills Zoning Board of Appeals rejected a request for a use variance that would have allowed the building of a 83,000-square-foot Kroger store in a 126,000-square-foot shopping center at Haggerty and Nine Mile.

Board member Greg Kocak, who voted in the majority, said the Midland Group failed to show unnecessary hardship in trying to develop the property under the current office zoning of the 17 acres for the site sandwiched between I-275 and Haggerty, north of Nine Mile.

Board member Mary Avery, who voted for the variance, said the master plan provided for just such a development in that area.

"This isn't surrounded by residential," she said. "It could be a benefit to the southwest quadrant."

Board member alternate Randal Bruce joined Avery in opposing the rejection.

The rejection coupled with the city council's unanimous action against a rezoning request for the property in September leaves court action as the only other path, said attorney Norman Hyman, who represents Midland.

"Yes, we are planning court action," he said after the vote. "That should speak volumes."

The property owners — George Vancik, Juanita Vancik, Nicholas Lubnik, Deborah Lubnik and Selective Development Co. — had contended that they could not sell the property after nine years of trying under the current zoning. That constituted a hardship, the developer said.

They had failed to have it rezoned from office use to commercial after the city planning commission had voted 4-4 for the change and the council rejected it 7-0.

The petitioner failed to establish that its plight was due to unique circumstances peculiar to its property and not to general neighborhood conditions," said the motion drafted by City Attorney Derek Beckerleg.

Had the use variance been granted, it would have had the effect of rezoning the land.

Although some residents had said they would like a grocery store/drug store type shopping center in the area, the majority of Farmington Hills and Novi residents who spoke at a public hearing in September were opposed to more noise and traffic, and the impact on residential property values in the area.

A court case involving Novi last year established the need for a developer or property owner to exhaust all other possibilities before resorting to a lawsuit. For that reason, the Midland Group had to request the variance before the zoning board before taking court action.

A one and a two — oops!

Some Farmington Hills residents must have wondered how they missed paying their water and sewer bills on time.

City officials apologized at Monday's city council meeting because the bill were sent out Jan. 8 and the due date on some of them was Jan. 7. It should have read Feb. 7, said Tom Binsell, director of public services.

"The (Oakland County) billing clerk hit the one instead of the two," he said. "Those affected are in the south and east. It was just one batch of billings."

Binsell said residents who received the bills with the wrong date should consider the deadline Feb. 7. If anyone paid the late penalty,

FARMINGTON FOCUS

thinking that it was due Jan. 7, that penalty will be credited to the next bill, Binsell said.

Questions can be directed to the Oakland County Drain Commission at (810) 858-1110.

Helping out

The Bishop's storehouse and cannery of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Farmington Hills answered the call last week.

After the Comair commuter plane crash on Thursday, the storehouse put together a shipment of canned goods to send to the site to help feed the 150 to 200 investigators, cleanup work-

ers and volunteers.

"The church just wanted to respond however they could help," said Bonnie Nielson, director of public affairs for the church's Detroit region.

Members of the Latter-Day Saints congregation in Monroe asked for the help, which was answered with a shipment of canned goods, including stew, chili, pork and beans, vegetables and fruit. In addition they sent peanut butter, cocoa, fresh apples and grapefruit, bread, detergent, toiletries and more.

Nearly 2 tons was shipped. "It takes a lot of food to feed that many people three meals a day," said Nils Johansson, storehouse manager.

Most of the food was produced at the churches' canneries in Farmington Hills and from around the country, Johansson said.