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Top honors: A Farmington Hills Police Department employee goes the extra mile for the job. /A7

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Budget answers: Where's the money coming from seems to be one of the most frequently asked questions following the governors' budget message. We have some answers. /A8

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Hills OKs 27 homes on Power

**BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER**

A consent agreement under judicial pressure has some Power Road residents shaking their heads and the Farmington Hills City Council reluctantly agreeing to cut its losses.

At the strong urging of Oakland Circuit Judge Barry Howard, the council met in an executive session Wednesday night and then met openly to vote and explain the decision to agree to a 27-house development on Power Road, north of 11 Mile. The road is designated as a

Natural Beauty Road in the city's least dense zoning, RA-1A.

"Frankly, I wasn't sure we were going to have a public meeting," said Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi who voted with the majority. "The timing was bad. We had to make a decision by Thursday."

The city and developer Joseph Trupiano went to Oakland Circuit Court Feb. 3 to make their respective cases. The city had defended its decision to rezone the historic area to the least dense zoning possible. The developer made the case that the change was unfair because he would not be able to develop as

planned.

Judge Howard encouraged the parties to accept a consent judgment by no later than Thursday, or take the matter to trial.

At Wednesday's special meeting, the council agreed 6-1, with Councilman Terry Sever opposing, to take what most thought was the best deal the city could get.

"Frankly, we're committed," said Vagnozzi, adding that the issue will be part of Monday's regular meeting. "I thought we'd have more time on this. We were following our attorney's advice."

The agreement will allow the

developer to build 27 houses, as opposed to the original proposal that included 41 homes. Sever pushed for 24 homes, which would have met the RA-1A zoning density requirement.

The city also agreed to spend up to a maximum of \$300,000 for "off-site sanitary sewer and water main improvements." The city hopes to recoup most of that through tap-in fees.

Vagnozzi said that will allow the city to provide sewers and water to all residents of the area, where some current residents have had problems with their wells. And it also gives

See POWER, A8



Book talk: Ritsuko Yamaguchi (left), of West Bloomfield tells a story to her friend, Akemi Kurumatsawa of Farmington Hills over coffee at Border's Books and Music.

Store really reads its audience

**BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER**

What do you call a place where jazz musicians and popular recording artists play, experts offer advice on a wide variety of topics and singles sometimes meet and mingle?

A bookstore. Well, sort of.

Borders Books Music Cafe has found that people want more than just what's on the shelf. The result has been entertaining.

"We've had Joan Collins, Grant Hill, Judy Collins and many local authors here," said Robert del Valle, who hosts a many of the programs at the Orchard Lake location.

"We had Bruce Hornsby here in 1995," he said. "He brought his own piano and

See BOOKS, A2

Joint meeting hits band, bathrooms

**BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER**

Farmington Public Schools officials asked city officials for support in their upcoming bond election. City officials asked if they could use the schools' bathrooms.

Yes, you guessed it. Officials were exchanging ideas again at the annual joint meeting between the school district and Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils.

All three elected bodies meet to share concerns and discuss working together on programs. They talked about bonds, buses and bathrooms with equal zeal Thursday at William Costick Center.

School officials had a chance to pitch their \$110 million bond and millage renewal election March 25. Money raised from bonds would pay for building and technological improvements — not teachers' or administrators' salaries, school officials said.

School board President Dave York asked the cities' help in getting people to get involved. City officials didn't stumble over one another pledging support.

Voters are asked to renew 1.7503 mills for home-stead and 5.9166 mills for non-homestead property. A separate ballot question deals with the \$110 million bond.

If approved, the bond would increase taxes by 2 mills. That means the owner of a \$165,000 home would pay \$165 more a year.

"A \$110 million dollars is a tough sell to the community," Hills councilman Jerry Ellis said, asking how they would sell it.

Farmington Councilman Arnie Campbell wanted to know if building improvements meant cafeteria expansion and a closed campus during lunch at Farmington High School.

Campbell's query was prompted by parking complaints the Farmington council has received in the past from nearby residents. High school cafeterias will not be expanded, answered assistant superintendent for finance Cheryl Cannon.

Ellis suggested the district seek support from the business community. The district asked the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce for advice on the matter, said Pam O'Malley, director of community relations.

Several meetings are planned with residents, homeowner groups and seniors, O'Malley added.

"We're not asking for elaborate facilities for students," Cannon said. "But, rather, facilities that will meet the needs of teaching and learning for today and in the 21st Century."

School facilities are useful for another pressing need, Hills councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio said.

See MEETING, A3

Pool to pinball — we've got fun, games

**BY GARY WORONCHIAK
SPECIAL WRITER**

Whether with family, friends or flying solo, Farmington residents have no shortage of places to have fun and relax after work or school is behind them.

From simulated racecar driving to a game of darts, from relaxing with a cup of coffee or a mug of beer, there's something for everyone around town.

Fun by the quarter

At Marvin's Marvulous Mechanical Museum on Orchard Lake Road at 14 Mile, family fun is in such abundance the lines between adults and kids can blur.

Dad's on the Daytona USA racecar simulator, virtually speeding around the track, as his son asks, "Where's Mom?" His eyes not leaving the game for a moment, Dad replies, "She's here somewhere, you just got to find her." A more attentive sibling offers, "She's by the snack bar."

When Dad finally raises his arms in triumph and declares, "First place!" he sees that his grandstand crowd has gone in search of Mom.

Arcade games dating to the early 1900s are found at Marvin's, but assistant manager Justin Bennethum is quick to correct.

"It's not an arcade," he says with a smile. "It's a museum. I've worked here a year and a half and I still haven't seen everything."

Modern simulators, video and pinball games, like a pinball version of Space Jam bearing Michael Jordan's image, are surrounded with classics like Pac-Man — still a quarter — and oldies like passion meters, photo booths and a Coney Island style mirror that makes a person look like taffy-stretched to 12 feet. Bennethum sees men in suits at lunchtime, lots of families on Saturday mornings and a packed house on Friday and Saturday nights. "We recommend the place for ages 1-90," he quips.

There's no admission charge, leaving visitors

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to decide how many quarters to spend.

"We have people call from all over to find out how to get here," says Bennethum. "I took a call from New York once."

Relax or rack 'em up

Roosevelt's Billiards Bar and Grill isn't easily categorized. Hardly just a pool hall, neither is it just another bar. Judging from the after-work crowd on Wednesday, and the occasional lines that fit in on the weekends, "gathering place" might fit.

"It's a good hangout, a good place to relax and grab a beer," said Farmington Hills resident Paul James.

As late-afternoon traffic clogs outside on Orchard Lake Road at 12 Mile, the scene is much less tense inside Roosevelt's. Just after

See FUN, A2

School board goes back to phonics

**BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER**

In describing a new language arts curriculum, the "P" word was mentioned prominently during a Farmington Board of Education study session — phonics.

And, more concisely, how the traditional method of teaching children how to read compares with modern whole language approach. On that front, they're both winners, a school official said.

Kathy Nyberg addressed the contentious issue at the onset of recommending a new language arts curriculum for kindergarten through grade five at the board gathering Feb. 2. The curriculum will be brought to the board for formal approval Feb. 25.

The committee dealt with the debate head-on, said the coordinator for the district's English Language Arts and World Languages program.

"In an excellent English language

arts program, phonics and whole language are not competitors," Nyberg said. "But instead, they are complementary components, each empowered by the presence of the other."

"The intention of the English language arts committee is to be blazingly clear on this issue."

Some critics contend the district strayed from stressing phonics, which teaches children how to read through sounding out syllables.

See PHONICS, A6

A QUEST for service

More than 100 students from four Farmington High Schools joined in QUEST Day on Feb. 1.

QUEST (Quad-schools United in Educational Service Time) brings students from Farmington, Harrison, North and Farmington Alternative Academy together to do volunteer work around town.

In all, 14 sites were visited.

Activities were varied: Some students taught swimming lessons and cleaned locker rooms at the William Costick Center; others helped organize books at the Farmington Community Libraries. Some worked on community surveys at the YMCA; while others painted inside the Longacre House and barricades for the city of Farmington.

"The students who visited nursing homes said

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that they had a very good learning experience," wrote Melissa Garr, a volunteer and representative of the Student Round Table which organized this sixth annual QUEST Day.

"They spent time playing games and having conversations with the senior citizens. Some of our students, including myself, made some new friends, young and old," Garr continued.

ABCs of safety

Members of the Farmington-Farmington Hills Breakfast Optimist Club will be busy this week, distributing safety fliers and stickers around the

community.

The 60-member club will be distributing 7,000 fliers urging parents to make sure their children under age 12 aren't buckled in the front seat of cars with a passenger-side airbag.

Elementary and middle school students will take home the fliers complete with colorful window decals stating: "Always Buckle Children in the Back Seat." They'll also be distributed at the police departments of the two towns.

The public awareness campaign aims to save the lives of children is co-sponsored by Optimist International and Morton International Inc.

Timing of the distribution couldn't be better, explained Dennis Fitzgerald, president of the club. "With Valentine's Day coming, what better theme than 'I love my kids as much as this.'" The group meets at 7:30 a.m. Wednesdays at the Costick Center.