

Farmington Observer

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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Delay again: The case against a man accused in the murder of two Farmington Hills women is postponed for a motion to remove the judge on the case. /A3

TASTE
Hot Dog: Kids love hot dogs, but so do adults. We eat more of them during the summer than at any other time of year. /B1

SPECIAL SECTIONS
Jazzfest: Birmingham's annual Jazzfest returns for a four-day run starting Thursday with a free concert in Shain Park.

HEALTH
Travel doctor: Before you take off for the four corners of the Earth, check in with Dr. Bruce Ruben in at the Farmington Hills Dr. Livingston Travel Clinic. /D5

BUSINESS
Entrepreneurs shine: Bloomfield Hills-based WPON radio features a talk show for and about entrepreneurs hosted by Patrick Gilligan. /F5

SPORTS
2 lives: During the week, Donna Shannon is a teacher and mother; on weekends, she lives in the fast lane as a champion jet-ski racer. /D1

Making a comeback: At age 23, Jennifer O'Donnell is trying to restoke the competitive fires and regain her former status as a champion archer. /D1

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School bond tab cut \$2 million



Farmington Public School District's second try at a bond issue election to fix and expand its school buildings was sliced almost 2 percent, thanks to money being freed up from the operating budget.

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Farmington's school bond issue probably will be about \$2 million less of a financial pill for voters to swallow when they go to the polls in September, said Superintendent Robert Maxfield Friday.

Maxfield, however, said the reduction of the total bond issue package from \$95 million to \$93.1 million has to be approved by the state. That approval, although labeled "very routine" by the superintendent, is why the school board won't be able to vote Tuesday to officially set Sept. 16 for the election date.

That decision will likely take place at a special meeting to be called for Tuesday, July 29.

According to Maxfield, the district earmarked \$3 million out of its budget for a county-wide dispute over the distribution of special education center program funds. But the district only needed to use \$1.1 million of that amount — opening up the remaining \$1.9 million to go toward fixing various facilities needs.

"There was an internal adjustment at Oakland County," Maxfield said. "So there's money we set aside for the potential resolution of this conflict that we no longer have to set

aside for it."

That conflict was apparently lodged by the Holly district, with officials maintaining "their special education funds were not handled properly," explained Maxfield. "The state determined Holly had something coming back, but not what they expected."

Maxfield emphasized that \$95 million worth of improvements still need to be made, only that the entire package won't need to be funded through bonds.

Please see BOND, A2

No sidewalks, thank you



Their sub: Gerald Dunn, 70, above has lived in West Franklin Estates for 42 years. Shown at left is the entry sign and the path that would host the sidewalk. Below, Dave Carlson works on keeping his flower beds cleaned up and weed free.

Peace & quiet Folks in West Franklin Estates' protective of big lots, 'critters'



Editor's note: This is the fourth installment in our series looking at neighborhoods around the Farmington area, and the people who live in them.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

As the wind rustles through the pine trees in his front yard and a chorus of birds chirp, Harold and Charlotte Merritt wonder why anyone would dare tamper with their secluded and serene nature nook.

"Peaceful, isn't?" said Harold, sitting on the front porch of the Pear Ridge home his family has lived in for more than 40 years.

Residents of West Franklin Estates — east of Farmington Road and south of 14 Mile — are rather protective of their environmental enclave where billowing trees, dirt roads, septic tanks and well water are seen as endearing

characteristics. So, too, are deer, rabbits, foxes, coyotes and other "critters."

At present, West Franklin Estates residents are quarreling with the city of Farmington Hills over a planned 6-foot wide sidewalk for the east side of Farmington Road. A group presented a petition with 48 signatures — more than 90 percent of the sub's residents — to the city opposing the walk.

Such siege-like sensibilities are tied to newer development that increasingly surrounds them.

In the past, they've fought splitting the spacious 600 feet by 400 lots in the sub and a day care facility expansion.

"This (sidewalks) is just one item we've fought to maintain the character and the characters of this subdivision," said Glennmur Street resident Ellen Silverberg, who has lived in the sub with husband, Mark, for 21 1/2 years.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DEYAN MITCHELL

These characters are caught up in a real life drama where progress and preservation are constant sparring partners.

Gerald Dunn has lived in West Franklin Estates for 42 years. He remembers when Farmington was the type of road where someone could sleep in the middle without being disturbed. The whir of north and southbound traffic quickly reminds him those were definitely the old days.

"Now these kids come by with these ghetto blasters," said Dunn, 70, "and all you hear is, 'Da dum da dum...'"

Please see PEACE, A4

Downtown mall's \$700,000 facelift gets under way

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The anticipated modernization of the Downtown Farmington Center began Wednesday, but it will take months before the transformation starts to take shape.

Workers from Southfield-based Dowler-Ronnisch, Co. were up on the roof of one of three retail Kimco, Inc.-owned buildings slated for the facelift. They were ripping shingles off the roof of the smallest of the three buildings, part of which fronts Farmington Road.

"Our approach is to do one building at a time," said Rick Drew, vice president of Dowler-Ronnisch's retail division. Subsequently, workers will move over to larger buildings at the center — first to the one where Harmony House and Dagwoods Deli are located; then to the building anchored by Farmer Jack.

The long-discussed project will be done in two phases, said Farmington city manager Frank Lauhoff. Phase one, estimated to cost between \$700,000-\$800,000, entails modernizing the roofs and facades of all three buildings. It is expected to be completed by

Frank Lauhoff —city manager, Farmington

Please see MALL, A2

Cup visit brightens leukemia patient, 6

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Six-year-old leukemia patient Patrick Worman couldn't believe his eyes when someone recently walked into his room at Beaumont Hospital, with the Stanley Cup in tow.

That someone was Detroit Red Wings athletic trainer John Wharton, making the rounds with Lord Stanley on the Beaumont pediatrics floor. One of the stops was Patrick's room.

"He (Patrick) was just shocked," said his mom, Farmington Hills resident Linda Worman. "He stood on his bed, where (Wharton) put it down for about 10 minutes. He (Patrick) just wanted to look down into it."

Patrick, a pupil at Kenbrook Elementary School in Farmington, was

just diagnosed with leukemia on July 1 and spent 10 days at the Royal Oak hospital. But his mom said his prognosis was "fairly good, because it was caught early and because of his age."

Doctors estimate Patrick's chances of full recovery are about 70 percent.

He is now beginning three years of chemotherapy at the Rose Cancer Treatment Center, located in the Beaumont complex. Patrick is under the care of Dr. Charles Main and associates.

According to Linda Worman, the separate visits from Wharton and Mike Ilitch Jr. heartened her hockey-loving son. To document the moment, Patrick had his picture taken with Wharton and the Cup.

Please see CUP, A2

The big 600

The Dow Jones may have hit 8,000, but the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce is proud of its new record — 600.

Chamber records and staff memories say that this is the first time in at least six years that the chamber has 600 businesses on its roster.

Chamber President Maria Esposito credits several recent projects to recruit and retain businesses, along with the addition of an extra staff person and the work of the chamber's Ambassador's Club.

Don't look for the chamber to rest on its laurels, though. Esposito is asking chamber mem-

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bers to share the benefits and opportunities of membership with others this summer. For membership information, call 474-3440.

Wheeling in early

Sixty-year-old polis survivor Dr. Don Nichols of Farmington completed his cycling and jogging journey from Windsor to Key West, Fla., a bit early this week.

A March of Dimes welcoming party greeted him at 1 p.m. Thursday.

Nichols, who left June 25, made the trip to encourage donations to the March of Dimes and to raise awareness about its mission of reducing mortality and birth defects. So far, he has raised about \$10,000.

Nichols was featured in a June 26 Observer article, where he noted how the charity had paid for all of his braces, corrective shoes, crutches, wheelchairs, etc. for his own battle with polio. His trek was aimed at paying back the March of Dimes.

To contribute, call (248) 423-3200.