

# Farmington Observer

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Traffic fatality:** A 67-year-old woman died after a car crash on Halsted Road in Farmington Hills Tuesday. /A4

## OPINION

**Bash bust:** We commend the community's outcry and concern over a recent teen house party in Farmington. /A18

## COMMUNITY LIFE

**In the grapes:** A former Farmington school student makes a go of life in wine country, with a vineyard in California. /B1

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Satisfaction:** The Rolling Stones, "the Greatest Rock and Roll Band in the World," are bringing their best stuff to the Silverdome. /E1

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## FHS play's tone draws critics

By TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

Most who attended "Rumors" at Farmington High School last week thoroughly enjoyed how students performed the Neil Simon comedy.

But some didn't think content of the play, including swearing and references to drinking, was suitable for younger audience members. Fliers advertising the Nov. 6-8 performances at FHS were posted in the middle schools.

Parents of at least two middle school students subsequently called the high school to register complaints about the play's content, said assistant principal John Barrett.

"There were two complaints that I know of, that there was too much swearing and references to drinking in the play," said Barrett. "Everybody in the play was married. It was intended to be like a situation comedy."

The FHS auditorium was only about half-filled for each of the performances, with about 400 people attending the 800-seat venue. Barrett said "straight plays" typically are more sparsely attended than musicals.

But, Barrett continued, "Rumors" was presented, instead of the usual broad-based musicals, because co-directors Dick Burgess and Leanne Walter "were looking to do something a little different" for a high school audience.

"It's unfortunate that it was advertised to a younger audience," Barrett said.

According to the assistant principal, both Burgess and Walter "regret" that middle school students were encouraged to attend a comedy that might not have been suitable for them.

"In the future they'll be more careful about where they advertise," Barrett said.

Barrett described the general audience reaction to each performance as "excellent." But he conceded that it probably is trickier in the late '90s to serve up something on stage that does not offend someone.

"These days it's hard... with such a diverse audience, to please everybody, even though it was intended as a comedy," Barrett said.

## Hot off the gridiron



**Hawks on a roll:** Scott Meier cooks up some burgers while tailgating before Farmington Harrison's first-round playoff game against Dearborn Edsel Ford. The Hawks won 56-21 and face Ypsilanti on Saturday. For more details on the team's state championship bid, please turn to Page C1.

STAFF PHOTO BY DEAN BRIDGEMAN

## Council, developer haggle over plans

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

In the wake of two rezoning requests being shot down by Farmington Hills City Council members, a proposed 70-to-80-unit housing development for 13 Mile Road remains swirling in the dust.

Phoenix Development wants to build a high-density project on four of 12 acres on a parcel next to the Detroit Baptist Manor senior center. In exchange for more units, the developer is offering remaining land to be used for a park area and protection for existing wetlands.

The Farmington Hills City Council took another step in unlocking a stalemate between the developer and near-

by residents, denying their respective rezoning requests at Monday's regular meeting.

Phoenix officials asked the parcel to be rezoned for more density, from RA-2 to multiple-family housing. Highmeadow residents requested it be changed to the less dense RA-1.

Council members turned down the Phoenix rezoning request. The homeowners' request was subsequently denied 6-1 with Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi dissenting.

The action allows the developer to proceed with a request for planned unit development, which wouldn't be affected by the rezoning denials. The PUD request, if pursued, wouldn't be heard before the planning commission until

December. Meanwhile, council members and the developer continue to haggle over the number of units proposed.

Steven Schafer proposed 70-80 units in a study session with residents and council members Oct. 28. At Monday's meeting, he was sticking to 80 units. Some council members feel 70 units should be a starting point for negotiation; Vagnozzi said it should be 60.

"I was very much disturbed when he comes in with 80 units and try to push it to council," Vagnozzi said. "I don't think it shows good faith."

Schafer maintains additional units are needed to make the project profitable. Phoenix previously received PUD approval for a 40-unit project, but

the development would've covered the entire 12 acres.

Schafer came back with a revamped proposal that provides a greenbelt and protects existing wetlands in an attempt to appease residents and council members.

"I'm making an effort," Schafer said. "Some residents and the mayor are not impressed, though."

Residents said they like the greenbelt and protection of wetlands, but they are worried about increased traffic and the potential of a domino effect for similar high-density developments on 13 Mile.

One subdivision resident said 13 Mile is already a bottleneck at rush-

Please see DEVELOPER, A2

## Moviegoers will miss Old Orchard Theater

By RICHARD PEARL  
STAFF WRITER

Whether it becomes a dollar store or a restaurant, theater-goers say the Old Orchard 3 Theater will be missed.

The movie house, the only Farmington Hills theater operated by American Multi Cinema Inc. and one of three in metro Detroit reported to be scheduled for closing by the corporation, is expected to shut its doors sometime after the first of the year.

The other two are the Americana West, north of the Old Orchard on Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield, which is rumored to become an auto dealership, and the AMC Eastland Mall in Harper Woods.

However, no confirmation could be obtained from AMC's regional office in New Jersey, which did not return

Observer telephone calls. The Old Orchard Theater, a three-screen house operating at a time when 16- and 20-screen houses are becoming the norm, has been open at its site on Orchard Lake Road north of 12 Mile Road since the middle 1970s.

And there was no word as to what use the building would be put, although Dale Countegen, director of planning, community and economic development for Farmington Hills, said he had gotten some inquiries.

### Office use

He said the building is zoned for office use, with a special use permit allowing it to be operated as a movie house. "We've had one party who has inquired about the redevelopment of

Please see OLD ORCHARD, A4

## A solemn day



**Ceremony:** More than 300 senior citizens celebrated Veterans Day with an event in Farmington Hills last week. At left, Cadet Col. Thomas Smith of the ROTC carries his weapon. For more on the program, please see Page A6.

STAFF PHOTO BY JEFF KUSZEL

### Front-door screening

Greg Holler was irritated and it was easy to understand why.

He had learned from an Observer reporter seeking an interview that there were two containers of movie film sitting outside the main doors to his Farmington Civic Theater on Grand River.

"Probably some second-line delivery service that doesn't know not to leave things, that they're supposed to have someone sign for them," Holler said.

But then the reporter pointed out the logo on the delivery label and Holler was even more irritated. It read Federal Express.

### Brought to you by . . .

This weekend's annual Cornucopia Ball to benefit the Farmington/Farmington Hills Community Foundation for Children, Youth and Families has

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three honorary sponsors. They are Botsford General Hospital, The Farmington Observer and James & Beatrice Ryan of Fourteenth Avenue Cartage Co. Inc. In addition, the honorary benefactors are the Ryan Children of Jebco Investments, L.C., TRW and URS Greiner.

The 6 p.m. Saturday ball features a gourmet dinner, auction and dancing with the Mark Phillips Orchestra at the William Costick Center. Tickets for the black-tie optional gala are \$100 per person and a portion qualifies as a 501.C3 charitable contribution, with money benefiting the Hills' youth centers and family programs. Call 559-8891 for tickets.

### Knowing the drill

Dr. Jeff Stein, D.D.S., is hanging up his drill and heading for Hollywood, but leaves his Farmington Hills dental practice in the capable hands of Dr. Nicole Meadows, D.D.S. She'll continue at the location on 13 Mile across from the Glen Oaks golf course east of Orchard Lake.

Stein, a dental school associate of Meadows, is moving to the West Coast where his wife and children have promising movie careers. For the past three years, Stein has been flying out on Thursdays and coming back on the red-eye on Mondays. The grueling schedule finally caught up with him. "I'm proud to be succeeding such a fine practitioner," said Meadows. "We practice the same philosophies of dentistry and he has a beautiful office in which to work. His current staff will be staying."