

# Farmington Observer

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## Many drill Hills gas, oil proposal

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

A swarm of residents put the collective sting on a proposed oil and gas drilling site.

West Bay Exploration is seeking a permit to drill two wells for gas and oil in the Haggerty and Nine Mile area. They have a state permit, but need the city's OK to proceed.

The Farmington Hills City Council tabled the matter after a lengthy and, at times, emotional public hearing Monday. The council will vote - more than likely to deny the permit - at the Dec. 16 meeting.

Many neighbors in the Meadowbrook quadrant are vehemently opposed to the drill site, citing health and safety concerns - chiefly the potential release

of hydrogen sulfide.

Meadowbrook residents Against Drilling also questioned the legality of mineral rights leases signed by homeowners in exchange for royalties. West Bay solicited those signatures before getting permission from the city, they said.

Homeowners also question West Bay's standing as a public utility, which may have a bearing on the zoning. Three acres north of the First Church of the Nazarene is zoned an office research district.

"Think of our presentation as a very large gun and we have given you bullets," said Rick Lethoman, Meadowbrook resident and MAD spokesman. "That was the first bullet."

A pharmacist, a Novi resident with gas well near his home and the presi-

dent of an environmental group were among those who spoke against the two wells.

Such appeals swayed council members, which initially wanted to have a

study session. By the end, several council members wanted to deny the permit on the spot.

Please see DRILLING, A6

## Rights sellers confident

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Residents who have leased their rights that allow a Traverse City exploration company to drill for oil and gas near their homes are not having second thoughts.

That despite concerns raised by their neighbors in the Meadowbrook quadrant over how such drilling will add noise and smell - not to mention possi-

ble health risks - associated with the release of hydrogen sulfide.

Some 50 to 60 residents, many who live in Meadowbrook Park sub, have leased their mineral rights to West Bay Exploration Co. In return, property owners will receive royalties on any gas and oil tapped from two wells planned.

Neighbors are worried about hydrogen sulfide, a byproduct of such drilling.

Please see SELLERS, A6

### IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Dancing days:** The Farmington Festival of the Dance comes to town Friday, after a week of work with local students./A13

### COMMUNITY LIFE

**Surviving a hippo:** A man talks about losing a limb and his mission to help others in Africa who need prostheses./B1

### SPORTS

**Hoop preview:** Coach Brian Swinehart counts on seven seniors to lead the North Farmington boys basketball team./C1

**Open season:** Farmington High and Farmington Harrison began a new season in boys basketball with wins on the road Monday./C1

### SPECIAL SECTION

**Making Memories:** Still looking for some holiday inspiration? Check out our second gift guide of the holiday season.

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## Hardships didn't deter Vladimir's catering calling

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

As a young man, Vladimir Sarcovich had to overcome many hardships, including being a prisoner of war in a German concentration camp.

So it was no wonder that later in life, Sarcovich, who died Dec. 4 at age 73 following a long illness, always emphasized that people enjoy themselves whenever they came to Vladimir's Catering. Sarcovich founded the Farmington Hills business in 1969.

"My brother was real kind, he liked company," said his brother, Nick Sarcovich. "He got into people's hearts."

Vladimir, who had been in poor health for several years, still had that mind set even at the very end.

"His last request was that everybody who came to his funeral should come to Vladimir's and drink, eat and have a good time," Nick Sarcovich said. "He said don't cry for him, he had a good life."

Vladimir Sarcovich's final wish was heeded. More than 300 people attended Tuesday's funeral at St. Lazarus Serbian Orthodox Cathedral-Bavaria in Detroit and then came over for a memorial luncheon at the Grand River banquet hall.

"That's what he wanted," he said. "We can't replace him, but we learned a lot from him and we'll continue the way he wanted. The customer comes first."

According to Nick, his brother managed to drop in for a couple days a week until becoming very ill during the past year or so.

Please see VLADIMIR, A4

### Making a list ...



Details: Sarah Mancos of Farmington gives her complete list of Christmas wishes to Santa in the tent in the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot. Below left, Santa arrives.



Say hey, Santa: Timmy Devine, 2, and his father, Tim, of Farmington wave to Santa as he pulls into the parking lot.

## Santa arrives

The holiday season really got into full swing with Saturday's Holidays Around the World program, hosted by the Farmington Downtown Development Authority.

Nearly 600 came out on a snowy day to see Santa Claus arrive on a special holiday fire truck in the downtown Farmington Center Mall parking lot and then greet youngsters under the big tent.

Linda Trzinski of Farmington Center Florist deemed Holidays Around the World a hit.

"We had a good amount of traffic," Trzinski said. "It wasn't as well-attended as the Halloween program,

but the snow really made things a whole lot more festive.

Fifteen stores throughout downtown Farmington contributed to the holiday spirit by handing out trinkets and small gifts to the youngsters who stopped by.

For example: Trzinski gave out coloring books; Big Apple Bagel handed out Christmas cookie cutters; Focal Point Studios distributed Japanese fans; those who visited the Pasta Stop were treated to Italian cookies and pine were given out at Celtic Shamrock.

Holiday songs, hot cocoa, arts and crafts and Classic Trolley rides

around Farmington were other favorites.

In addition, the day included free visits to the historic Gov. Warner Mansion, courtesy of Books Abound and Focal Point, as well as free screenings of "Scrooge" with Albert Finney at the Civic Theatre, sponsored by Dubin Optometric.

DDA Executive Director Judy Downey said Saturday's attendance was less than Halloween, as is the case every year. But she still called the event a success. "It was very well received. You have so many holiday events going on at the same time."

### Earning citations

Three citizens were awarded Civilian Citations from the Farmington Hills Police Department's Citation and Award board recently. The three employees at Steamer's Restaurant - Eric Brown, Nick Dietzel and Daman Quarker - chased and caught a purse snatcher earlier this year.

Dietzel and Quarker saw the purse being grabbed by a man and chased him near the Comfort Inn Hotel where the two of them and Brown wrestled the suspect to the ground and held him for police. They also got the purse back and it was returned to the owner.

Other awards were presented to officers and administrators at the police department.

### No child or senior without a Christmas

That's the motto of the Farmington Area Goodfel-

## FARMINGTON FOCUS

lows, who are busy this week gathering donations of food, toys, clothes, grocery vouchers and more from volunteers for Saturday's delivery to local people in need.

Goodfellows Chairman Dick Tupper notes that last year holiday packages were delivered to 141 seniors or disabled adults and 165 families, including 331 children in the Farmington and Farmington Hills area - the most successful delivery ever.

In all, more than \$76,000 was returned to the community in help, with all the work done by volunteers.

Anyone who can help is invited to call the Goodfel-

lows office at 474-3440.

### Deep into Rouge Info

A guide to sites of environmental contamination in the Rouge River watershed is available in 35 area libraries, including the Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills and the Farmington Library on Liberty Street in Farmington.

The citizens guide was released by a subcommittee of the Rouge River Remedial Action Plan Advisory Council. It includes details on sites of contamination, regulations, health effects and appropriate contacts for local, state and federal agencies.

For more information or a list of other libraries with the information, contact Cathy Bevan of the state Department of Environmental Quality at (313) 953-1441.

## Smaller stores finding a niche

BY TONY BRUSCATO  
STAFF WRITER

In the world of retail, it used to be David vs. Goliath during the holiday season.

David, the small retailer, trying to keep from getting squashed by Goliath, the malls, during the holiday crusade for your cash or credit.



However, as more and more independent business owners have learned to battle, it appears there's no longer a war for your holiday dollar. In fact, many retailers say they're getting a fair share of business because they've learned how to compete ... and to survive.

"We've been here for 10 years and have developed a unique niche," said Larry Salten, owner of Clothes Encounters in downtown Farmington. "We provide a good selection of unique merchandise at affordable and realistic prices ... and by doing that we have developed a reputation of having merchandise the customers won't find in a mall. Otherwise, it would be too hard to compete."

### Key to success

And, besides being unique, repeat customers are a big part of success.

"We have a dedicated and repeat customer," Salten said. "Any owner-based business, if it wants to be successful, has to work with the customer ... who is No. 1."

Unique merchandise and customer service is a must for the small retailer, according to Kathleen Richard, director of the Merchandising Management Program at Madonna University in Livonia.

"Smaller retailers in a downtown strip mall are not getting the natural draw, so they need some product or service that's unique," said Richard. "Niche marketing has helped smaller businesses survive. They need to make it a pleasant shopping experience, with services like gift wrapping, to compete with the mega malls ... which are department stores with a bigger draw of customers."

Carl Thomas, owner of Sports Images in downtown Farmington, agrees. "Downtown is holding its own"

Please see RETAIL, A8