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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

California city offers Hobbs job



Farmington Hills City Manager Dan Hobbs has reportedly accepted a new job in a California community. He was unavailable for comment Wednesday as he was flying back from California.

Farmington Hills City Manager Dan Hobbs is reportedly leaving to accept a similar position in a community near Los Angeles.

Hobbs has been hired as city manager of 103,000-population West Covina, Calif., which is 25 miles east of Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Valley. He's expected to start Aug. 17.

Hobbs was flying back from California Wednesday and couldn't be reached for comment.

The West Covina City Council made the Farmington Hills manager its unanimous choice late Tuesday. He'll

make \$123,000 annually as part of a three-year contract, reports said.

"I'm surprised," said Hills Mayor Pro-Tom Vicki Barnett Wednesday. "He was doing a great job. He's done some great stuff here."

In his two years on the job, Hobbs is credited with several key hirings, including an economic development director and a cultural arts coordinator. Hobbs also increased municipal use of cable-TV Channel 8 and been behind several city hall technological improvements, Barnett said.

The Farmington Hills City Council

hired Hobbs in June 1996 to replace Bill Costick. The council offered the job to Hobbs after another candidate turned it down.

Coincidentally, the West Covina council offered its city manager position to someone else, who decided not to take it because of infighting between the council and police and fire unions. A council member there called the issue as "manufactured."

West Covina is a diverse community with a strong retail base, which includes two shopping malls. Revenue is partially generated through a 1-percent state sales tax that is returned to the city.

Along with negotiating contracts, West Covina's new city manager will have to fill vacancies for police chief,



City Manager Daniel Hobbs

Please see HOBBS, A14

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Election: We endorse in the Oakland County Commission, 18th District./A12

COMMUNITY LIFE

Crowned: Erin Cogswell is the new Miss Farmington./B1

AT HOME

Bloomin' success: Gardens in Birmingham, Livonia and Redford feature dazzling displays of living color./D6

ENTERTAINMENT

Jazz: Birmingham Jazzfest, Thursday-Saturday, July 23-25 showcases homegrown musicians./E1

Movies: Director Theresa Connelly weathers controversy over her debut film, "Polish Wedding," opening Friday./E1

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Moffitt says county is his passion

To ask David Moffitt a question about Oakland County government is like inquiring about a relative of an acquaintance and being recited the person's family tree.

For such detailed explanations of issues, the 46-year commissioner makes no apologies. County government "is my passion," said Moffitt, who is seeking the Republican nomination for the 18th District county commission seat.

The Farmington Hills resident is one of three candidates in the GOP primary Aug. 4. The attorney is running against Linda Jolicœur and Lesimo Wine.

With a few sighs needed to catch his breath, Moffitt grapples with the complexities of the 9-1-1 issue.

"This is not a tax us or don't tax us issue," said Moffitt, who chairs the Public Services Committee that oversees the issue.

The county is looking to spend \$2 million to improve existing public safety dispatch equipment, which is outdated in many departments.

While a 4-percent surcharge on telephone lines is being considered, Moffitt believes any increase should be voted on by taxpayers.

Please see MOFFITT, A14

Founders Fest Families love a parade

If you've never thought of lying on a yellow blanket smack-dab in the middle of Farmington Road, right where it meets Grand River, then you haven't met the Wehners.

That's precisely how the Farmington Hills family annually watches the Farmington Founders Festival parade.

This past Saturday was no exception, with mom Danielle and daughters Taylor, 9, and Shelby, 6, occupying their little section of the south crosswalk, right on the yellow traffic-dividing line.

"This has been our spot every year" since the family moved to the Hills eight years ago, said Mrs. Wehner. Dad Kent was the only one missing this year. He went golfing. "Opportunity knocked," said Mrs. Wehner.

Of course, on Saturday the Wehner females had lots of company: parade-goers sat or stood on both sides of them and across Grand River, stretching down to Orchard Lake Road, where the nearly 90 parade units came together from four different assembly areas, and up a block to Liberty, the finishing point.

Coordinator Jody Soronen of the Farmington Chamber of Commerce said about 6,000 parade-lovers, from infants to senior citizens, were on hand for this 38th annual spectacle, held under sunny skies and in warm temperatures, with low humidity and strong breezes.

The Wehner family arrives each year about 9:30 a.m., parks in the same spot a block or so north on Farmington and then secures its site.

"It's a great parade, the best of the year," said Mrs. Wehner. "Every time we've been here, it's been sunny," she

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added, noting the family also attends the Memorial Day parade, in which Taylor marches as a scout.

"We sit over there for that," said Mrs. Wehner, pointing to the sidewalk in front of Cowley's across the street.

Up Grand River to their left about 50 feet stood a veteran participant in many Founders Day parades, former longtime Farmington city councilman Dick Tupper.

"I was in every parade except for the last two," he said.

With him were his daughter, Hills resident Barbara Dresden, and ex-council member Carol Korth, now serving in the same capacity in the Hills, where she resides. They were awaiting Donna Tupper, Dick's wife, and watching for Carol's husband John, a Hills volunteer firefighter riding a fire truck in the parade.

Just down Grand River from the Wehners about 100 feet, standing in front of the Village Mall, were five teenage friends who've attended the parade since they were youngsters.

Four of them — Dan Patton, Casey Lowe, Dan Ferrari and Charlie Avery — will be seniors this fall at Farmington High School, while the fifth, Shawn Gobwin, will be in his first semester at Michigan State University.

The five expressed what a lot of parade-goers likely were feeling.

The parade, said Lowe, is "really nice. It gets the whole city together, gives everyone a chance to come

Please see PARADE, A14



Sunny day: Kazarah Aho, 2, left, and her sister Kinza, 4, wear their shades to take in the Farmington Founders Festival Parade Saturday.



Watching: Betty Walford, from left, Cecelia Heck, Corley Gustafson and Mildred Wei, all wives of Moslem Past Masters, sit with their parasols at the Farmington Founders Festival Parade.

Festival spells enthusiasm, fun

Community pride came out during the 34th annual Farmington Founders Festival.

So did the sun.

Put the two together, along with everything from sidewalk booths to bingo to banjo music, and it added up to a great time for the thousands who enjoyed a slice of the weeklong extravaganza.

"The general feeling from the people is it was a good time," said Carleigh Flaharty, president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, which sponsored the festival.

"When you sit on your picture window and see a parking lot with 170 spaces?" asked Donna Harborne, who has lived on St. Francis Street for 45 years.

Council's vote went against a planning commission recommendation that the zoning change be denied. In a 3-2 vote, the planning commission said it should be turned down because a parking lot district is incompatible with the existing neighborhood and doesn't fit

Flaharty said this year's festival again was bolstered by volunteer involvement and by enthusiastic support from the residents and businesses of Farmington and Farmington Hills.

"This is what we're all about," she said. "There is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for this community from residents and the business community alike."

It was estimated that about 6,000 people attended the festival, which took place July 5 through Sunday with events and activities in both Farmington and Farmington Hills.

"We ordered up some great weather, so we were really fortunate."

Parking lot prompts concern for neighbors

A parking lot doesn't cast shadows, but don't tell that to residents living next to Bedford Hospital.

The hospital wants to expand the parking lot of its administrative building onto property bordering a residential street. Those on the east side of St. Francis Street believe what seems like one small step is a giant leap that will decimate their neighborhood.

At Monday's Farmington Hills City Council meeting, those for and against

the parking lot expansion spoke during a public hearing on the zoning change to see the parking lot through.

City council passed 5-2 the zoning change from a residential district to P-1 parking district. Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and Council member Terry Sever voted against it.

"When you sit on your picture window and see a parking lot with 170 spaces?" asked Donna Harborne, who has lived on St. Francis Street for 45 years.

and maybe children? Or, are you going to look out your picture window and see a parking lot with 170 spaces?"

Council's vote went against a planning commission recommendation that the zoning change be denied. In a 3-2 vote, the planning commission said it should be turned down because a parking lot district is incompatible with the existing neighborhood and doesn't fit

BOTSFORD HOSPITAL

with the city's master plan.

Only five of the nine-member planning commission were present at the June 18 meeting, council members said.

Please see PARKING, A8

