

Farmington Observer

Thursday
January 14, 1999

HomeTown
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VOLUME 112 NUMBER 32 FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48106 7 PAGES http://www.observeronline.com SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Help: Donations are coming in for the Farmington PlayScape, but there's a continuing need. We have listed those who have donated or purchased pickets for the proposed play structure. /A7

COUNTY

Starting fresh: Michael Bouchard started as the new Oakland County sheriff this week, reshaping the department as he wants it. /A9

COMMUNITY LIFE

Which way? Linda Grekin, a librarian at Hillel Day School, talks about her new book, "I'll Never Get Lost Again," to help us all gain a sense of direction. /B1

SPORTS

Wins: North Farmington had 23 first-place swims Saturday out of a possible 45 to capture the team championship in the West Bloomfield Invitational. /C1

INDEX

Obituaries	A12
Classified Index	G4
Real Estate	G4
Crossword	G6
Jobs	H4
Home & Service	J1
Automotive	J2
Opinion	A10-11
Sports	C1
Calendar	C5
Real Estate	F1

Cable users want answers

Armed with their bills and their annoyance, cable subscribers expressed their concerns about service with Time Warner.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Cable subscribers came armed with bills and plenty of bite. They're not happy with Time Warner's performance.

At Tuesday's public hearing, complaints ranged from rates to the incessant hum during council meeting cablecasts. Speakers included school officials from Farmington, Clarenceville and Novi as well as John Q. Subscriber.

The hearing was conducted by Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

SWOCC and Time Warner are renegotiating their franchise agreement, which expired almost two years ago. Public hearings are part of the re-franchising process. SWOCC is the regulatory authority for Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi.

A Farmington Hills resident wanted to know why she pays \$36 a month while her daughter pays \$21 in Canton for a similar service.

"I'd like some answers please," said Catherine Stevens.

A lack of competition is the main problem, others said.

In Canton, residents can choose between two companies - MediaOne and Americast. Americast has expressed an interest in starting up cable service here but hasn't so far, SWOCC officials said.

"The problem I notice with Time Warner is every time I call to ask about something they say we've chosen not to do that," said David Devroy, a Farmington Hills resident. "That to me is a company that needs competition."

Subscribers also complained about poor reception, a lack of amenities such as cable modems and lastestur channels.

Another Farmington Hills resident was unhappy when Time Warner took off TV Ontario.

Initially, a rolling menu replaced the Canadian educational channel. Time Warner has since added WFUM, a Public Broadcasting System based in Flint.

"Now my children can watch 'Sesame Street' simultaneously on WFUM and WTVS Channel 56," Phil Cwagenberg said. "I don't understand the rhyme or

Please see CABLE, A12



Stop! Longacre Elementary School parent Marybeth Sikora makes a cellular phone call to Longacre Elementary while she stops traffic for children to cross Gill Road. Upon arrival at Gill Road and Arundel, she discovered the newly hired crossing guard wasn't there.

Snowflakes arrived, crossing guard didn't

BY TIM SMITH
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The snow came again Monday afternoon, but the city of Farmington's new crossing guard didn't.

So Stacy Wilkin's first day on the job as full-time crossing guard at Gill-Arundel, near Longacre Elementary School, turned out to be her last. She was replaced as of Tuesday morning by parent Annalee Morrison, said Gary Goss, director of Farmington Public Safety.

"(Scheduling) conflicts arose with her," said Goss, about Wilkin. "I understand that, things happen. But the only thing is, if we had gotten a call to (dispatch) we'd have had an officer over there."

Parents, for a couple years,

requested an official, consistent, police presence at the corner, to help children safely cross heavily traveled Gill. The council approved the position in the fall, but a lack of applicants delayed the hiring until last week, Goss explained.

It didn't take long for the short list to get even shorter. Morrison agreed to replace Wilkin, with volunteer Bron Saunders-Dreyer as her emergency backup. The crossing guard will earn \$23.25 per day, which includes half-hour stints before and after school.

"I think Annalee wants to do it and Bron is more than happy to help," Goss said. "I feel a lot more comfortable with these two. They're very reliable."

Please see GUARD, A6



Hold on: Gabrielle Sikora and Courtney Green, from safety patrol, hold the kids back as they wait for a responsible adult.

Hills man accused of pulling gun

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Farmington Hills police arrested a Hills man, 24, after another motorist said he pulled a gun on him during a traffic dispute Jan. 9.

The man was arraigned on a concealed weapons charge by 47th District Court Magistrate Joan Dudley Jan. 10. Bond was set at \$2,000. He has a preliminary exam at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 15.

Shortly after 4 p.m., a 42-year-old Warren man pulled out of the Shell gas station on Orchard Lake and 12 Mile. As he entered the southbound lane, a black 1994 Nissan Altima was already in the lane and sped up. While jockeying for the lane, the Nissan pulled next to the man's car when the passenger window rolled down. The driver shouted to the man to back up and started to reach underneath his seat, police reports said.

"Then the driver produced a black semi-automatic handgun and continued to yell at the man while a female passenger reportedly laughed. The vic-

Please see GUN, A6

North teachers endorse block scheduling

BY TIM SMITH
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By a 47-21 margin, North Farmington High School teachers last week endorsed going to block scheduling for the 1999-00 school year.

"There were no problems at all," said North teacher Mark Wilson, about the Tuesday, Jan. 5, faculty vote, in which

only 51 percent approval was needed. "There was no anger or hostility."

And, barring an unexpected turn of events, the plan is on the fast track to school board approval, perhaps in February.

The faculty-backed plan was outlined to parents by principal Deborah Clarke and teacher Michael Horner at an informational meeting Wednesday,

Jan. 6. "I think there was just a lot of concerns brought up" by parents at the meeting, said North parent Ilene Klegon. "We didn't take a vote."

Foremost among their concerns, Klegon said, is whether teachers will receive adequate training time before the first 91-minute sessions begin in late August.

Those issues - and the final proposal - were to have been again addressed during a closed meeting Tuesday afternoon, involving the North parent board and school improvement panel.

"Some of us are concerned that they're pushing it through too quickly," Klegon said. "We talked a lot about

Please see NORTH, A5



Dig: Residents are reminded to dig out mailboxes and fire hydrants during heavy snows.

Mount Drake Where will all the fallen snow fit?

BY TIM SMITH
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Farmington city workers will do what they can to keep streets and parking lots clear of snow - even if it means turning the Drake Park snow-dumping site into "Mount Drake."

Front-end loaders this week will clear more room at the site, where available dumping space is dwindling with each new snowfall. Department of Public Services crews will push back - as far and high as possible - piles of snow from the perimeter road at Drake Park, located between Grand River-Freedom.

"We'll go in ... and push it in to the center (of the lot)," said Farmington

City Manager Frank Lauhoff. "We'll stack it as high as we can."

But residents must also help themselves to deal with the heaviest January snowfall since 1979, and exercise some patience, said Lauhoff.

"We had this kind of snowfall before and we dealt with it then," said Lauhoff. "I just think people haven't experienced it in a long time. And it is a great inconvenience. We're just asking people to have patience. There's not much of an option."

About 22-24 inches of snow have fallen since the Jan. 2 blizzard. It's the heaviest January snow accumulation in the area to date since 1979, when 29 inches fell.

Around mailboxes

Residents also are being asked to help out by digging out around roadside mailboxes, to allow letter carriers to pull up and make their daily stops. "The city and the post office can't do this," Lauhoff said. "With routes along the road, postal people are having a hard time getting to it. People have to take some responsibility for their postal boxes."

Similarly, residents should clear snow from around fire hydrants on their property, so that emergency vehicles can have easier access if necessary.

Lauhoff said the Drake Park site is

Please see SNOW, A5

