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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Meet: The Farmington City Council will meet at 8 p.m. in chambers in city hall, 23600 Liberty.

TUESDAY

Agenda: The Farmington Board of Education will meet at 7:30 p.m. at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, 32500 Shiawassee.

WEDNESDAY

Neighborly confab: Farmington Hills City Council will have a community meeting for residents in the northeast quadrant at 7 p.m. in Fire Station No. 2 at 28225 Middlebelt.

THURSDAY

Planning: The Farmington Hills Planning Commission will meet for its scheduled public hearings at 7:30 p.m. at city hall, 31555 11 Mile.

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Mayors go to Lansing to make a case



By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@oe.homecomm.net

They don't like the revenue sharing proposals floating around Lansing. So the mayors of south Oakland shared a bus ride to the state Capitol to complain to their lawmakers.

The ironic part of the discord is under the proposed plans, suburban cities that are still growing like Farmington Hills would see more money.

Cities, townships and villages receive money from state sales tax revenue on a per capita basis. Those municipalities see additional money from the

statewide tax according to a formula based on relative tax effort.

Bills in the state Senate and House would change existing revenue sharing formulas.

In the case of Senate Bill No. 1181, officials said the city of Detroit and urban areas like Pontiac would suffer. Detroit alone would lose \$80 million a year under the proposed plan.

"So goes Detroit, so goes this whole area," said Farmington Mayor Mary Bush. "I know people don't like to hear that, but it's true."

Bush joined Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi as well as Southfield's Don Francasi, Troy's Jeanne Stine, Lathrup Village's Frank Brock Jr. and others in protesting the plan at a joint press conference Thursday. After the gathering in Farmington Hills City Hall,

See related story, Page A6

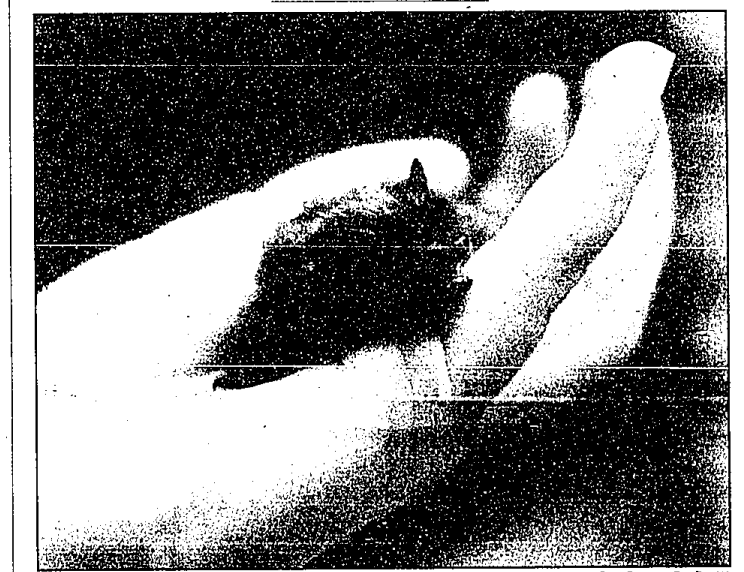


STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRISLER

Bound for Glory: Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi joins Farmington Mayor Mary Bush and Novi Mayor Kathleen McLallen (far right) on a bus for Lansing.

Please see REVENUE, A6

Endangered creatures



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DRISLER

How tiny: Bats native to Michigan, as shown above, are palm-sized insectivores.

GOING TO BAT for BATS

Did you know...

- There are nearly 1,000 species of bats worldwide, 70 percent which feed on insects.
- A single bat can consume up to 600 mosquitoes in an hour, up to 3,000 in one night.
- In the tropics, fruit-eating bats pollinate plants such as bananas, bats wood, agave and more.
- Bats are flying mammals that resemble humans more than rodents; they have a shoulder, elbow, wrist, four fingers and a thumb.
- Disturbance of roost sites because of development and vandalism are the greatest threats to the world's bats.
- Hundreds of cotton-ball-sized bats can roost in wooden bat houses put up in back yards, for example. But "You're not more likely to meet a bat if you have a bat house in your back yard than if you don't," assured Lori Bussa, of The Organization For Bat Conservation.
- By joining The Organization For Bat Conservation, located in Williamston, Ill., various bat-saving ecological research and conservation projects can be funded.

This story marks another installment of Today's Lesson, an occasional series that chronicles classroom activities in Farmington Public Schools.

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@oe.homecomm.net

The slide shown to sixth-graders in Warner Middle School's media center revealed bats in the nasty, snarling manner usually portrayed on film, TV and in print.

Hold the Batphone, said Lori Bussa of The Organization for Bat Conservation, during her recent visit to the Farmington district school.

"There are these myths," Bussa said. "One of them is that bats will attack you and get in your hair. ... But bats are scared of us. They try to stay away from us. They're shy and timid, just like a rabbit."

And the flying mammal don't use hairdos as landing strips, either. Bussa portrayed the lesser-known



Shy: Lori Bussa of The Organization for Bat Conservation displays a bat's wing.

side of bats, that they actually are harmless - though - endangered creatures that help human beings by eating 600 mosquitoes in an hour.

Because 40 percent of the bat population is in danger, "If we don't do anything about it, we'll have half the bats," Bussa said. "That means twice as many insects."

Helping her to make such myth-breaking points were three injured

Please see BATS, A4

Phoenix pulls out

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@oe.homecomm.net

When Farmington Hills city planners open bids to develop the 92-acre Eleven Pines property, Phoenix Land Development won't be among them.

ELEVEN PINES

Steve Schafer is pulling out of consideration amid controversy caused by former Hills Councilman Terry Sever's involvement in the proposal.

The city of Farmington Hills sought proposals for developing the land on Halsted and 11 Mile that will include the expansion of San Marino Golf Course. Bids will be opened Tuesday.

Phoenix Land Development hired Sever as a consultant and paid him while he was still on the city council.

While Sever didn't violate any laws, at least two colleagues - Vicki Barnett and Aldo Vagnozzi - are reportedly upset by Sever's involvement with the

Please see PHOENIX, A5

He follows his father's footsteps

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER
pmurphy@oe.homecomm.net

When Toby Tobin graduated from the Wayne Police Academy Friday, the joyous occasion had a touch of melancholy.

The 22-year-old West Bloomfield resident wrapped up 15 weeks of intense training, and is on the way to realizing a dream - being a certified officer with the Farmington Hills Police Department.

But Nov. 13 marked another important date in his young life. It was the fifth anniversary of the tragic death of his father, Southfield Public Safety Director Jerry Tobin.

"I think my dad would have approved," Toby Tobin said as he and 47 classmates finished their final full week of training at Schoolcraft College.

Tobin and Brian R. Moore represented Farmington Hills police, while some of their classmates had already been hired at police departments in Adrian, Roseville, Highland Park, River Rouge and other communities. Most of the class, however, were students completing their associate's degree from Schoolcraft and hoping to land a job.

"We take 15 weeks out of their lives,"

Please see FOOTSTEPS, A7

Police bust prostitution operations

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@oe.homecomm.net

The premise prostitution is a victimless crime doesn't sit well with the Farmington Hills police chief.

Bill Dwyer points to the arrest of a 17-year-old Detroit girl Thursday night as the reason why. Police took the teen into custody after she was working for an illegal escort service out of a Hills hotel.

Police believe the girl is part of a series of operations in which teens and runaways from Detroit and Flint are used as prostitutes.

FARMINGTON HILLS

"We found these places are using teenage girls and offering them jobs as escorts and then turning them into prostitutes," Dwyer said. "We find these girls are the victims."

The police chief cites the brutal murder of Tina Biggar in 1995. The Farmington Hills resident and Oakland University student was killed after she became entangled

Please see PROSTITUTION, A3

Counterfeit: Learning how to spot funny money

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@oe.homecomm.net

Greenbacks, 10 spots and sawbucks ... As numerous euphemisms are for money, counterfeiters are becoming even more creative and savvy in duplicating currency.

Funny money and bogus bills are turning up in cash registers at an alarming rate. In the Detroit area alone, \$1,500-1,700 in counterfeit

money is passed weekly.

U.S. Treasury Department is circulating redesigned \$100, \$50 and \$20 bills to thwart counterfeiters. Within a week of introducing the new \$100 bills, though, phony Franklins were already being produced, U.S. Secret Service agents said.

People who deal in financial transactions - whether at a bank, store or vending machines - attended a seminar on how to spot holiday fraud and

counterfeit money Wednesday. Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield police crime prevention departments sponsored the session at Hills city hall.

"I work in a bank and I thought my job would be easier when the new bills came out," said a woman who attended the crime prevention seminar. "I guess not."

A keen eye for detail is the key for stopping fake bills from being passed, said Dale Pupillo of the FBI.

Larger photos on new bills are not to glorify founding fathers and former presidents. Instead, they allow for more fine line detail that makes it impossible for counterfeiters to reproduce.

For instance, on the Franklin \$100 there is microprinting on the inventor's coat lapel.

Other features make authentic bills stand out. New notes have color-shift

Please see COUNTERFEIT, A8

