

THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Hills: In the zone: Farmington Hills City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed Gateway II shopping center in the Northwestern Highway/Orchard Lake/14 Mile Road area at their Jan. 22 meeting, which begins at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads. Officials will also consider rezoning Highmeadow Acres, between 12 and 13 Mile Roads east of Orchard Lake Road, from RA-1 to RA-2B, and they are expected to table a request for tax abatement from Robert Bosch Corporation.

TUESDAY

Schools meet: The Farmington Board of Education, at its regular 7:30 p.m. meeting at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, will adopt an ordinance pertaining to sponsorships for school teams and clubs. Also on the agenda are results of the recent parent/community survey. The Schulman center is located at 32500 Shiawassee.

TODAY'S PAPER

Calendar: The community calendar is back on Page A6. Items for the calendar should be in to the Observer by 5 p.m., Fridays.

INDEX

- Apartments/E8
- Arts/C1
- Automotive/H4
- Classified/E, G, H
- Classified
- Index/E4
- Crossword
- Puzzle/E5
- Jobs/G1
- Malls/C4
- Movies/C5
- New Homes/E1
- Obituaries/A5
- Real Estate/E1
- Service Guide/H4
- Sports/B1
- Taste/O1
- Travel/C8

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Planners turn down 14 Mile projects

By JONI HUBRED
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Farmington Hills Planning Commission members stuck to their guns Thursday, denying rezoning requests for two properties involved in a Planned Unit Development in the 14 Mile/Northwestern/Orchard Lake area.

Lowe's Home Centers asked that 13.8 of the 15.8 acres over which the company has control be rezoned from RA-4, Single Family Residential, OS-1 Office Service and P-1/Parking, to B-3 General Business District. Representing the company, Rick Ratner told

Planning Commission members the request fit with the city's Master Plan. "We are almost surrounded completely by non-residential zoning," he said, citing just one area of residential properties to the south. "Forty-eight percent of what we are asking to zone B-3 is non-residential now."

The land on the south side of Northwestern and east of Orchard Lake Roads is already included in a proposed Planned Unit Development that will be reviewed by Hills Council members at their Jan. 22 meeting. Planning consultant Claude Coates said the request did represent a change in the Master Plan.

"I think the intent of the Master Plan was setting forth land use patterns if the area was developed as a whole," he said. "The Master Plan doesn't really designate areas for sepa-

rate land use." Officials wanted commercial properties in that area developed as a whole, to avoid locking in neighboring residential subdivisions, Coates explained. His report recommended denial because a change in the Master Plan should only be accomplished through the PUD process, he said.

Ratner said the Master Plan showed the property within a "Special Planning Area," and while the proposed rezoning wasn't an exact fit, it had "a fair proximity" to the uses allowed. He said the Lowe's 15-acre parcel is north of existing homes and wouldn't impact the redevelopment of the Glen Acres subdivision.

He also argued the only way the whole area would be developed at once is if all the property owners sign off on the PUD agreement. The rezoning,

FARMINGTON HILLS

however, would be a "no lose" proposition, he said. If the other properties are developed as a retail center, Lowe's fits as a commercial use, and if the land is left undeveloped, the Lowe's rezoning would still fit with the Master Plan. Asked why the company had requested B-3 zoning rather than B-2, Ratner said, "We would consider B-2. We took B-3 because it allowed a greater latitude."

Later in the evening, commissioners also denied a request by Phoenix Land Development and Grand Sakwa Prop-

Please see PROJECTS, A2

Farmington students at Inaugural

One from Mercy, one from Harrison



By JONI HUBRED
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If you think last year's confusing elections only caused problems in Florida, talk to Karen Blazaitis, owner of Mid American Pompon Inc.

As she has for the past two elections, Blazaitis wanted to submit an application that would allow the Mid American All Stars, an elite performance troupe, to participate in this year's Inaugural Parade. The confusion over who would be President extended to where she should send the performance tape.

"Finally, I called (11th Congressional District Congressman) Joe Knollenberg's office. They connected us with the military," Blazaitis said.

Then, there was the matter of music. Parade rules prohibit playing certain songs, like "Hail to the Chief" or any military themes.

When the All Stars performed for Bill Clinton's first inaugural parade, the choice was his adopted campaign theme, "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow."

Please see POMPON, A4



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDLER

Practice, practice: Christina Kjolhede of Harrison High School and Linda Karbo of Mercy High School practice their routine for the inaugural parade.

Hills firemen host critical blood drive

By TIM SMITH
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An emergency plea by the American Red Cross has upped the numbers of donated pints of blood at several Farmington Hills blood drives.

But the shortage of blood remains critical. To that end, Red Cross regional donor representative Joann Lindquist is keeping her fingers crossed that the month-long pattern of increased donations will continue at Thursday's open blood drive at the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

The blood drive is from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the department's headquarters on Orchard Lake south of 11 Mile roads. Open blood drives enable anyone to set up an appointment to donate, as long as they meet criteria such as being age 17 or older, healthy and weighing at least 110 pounds.

"It is real important, we're in such a shortage," Lindquist said last week.

"It's really bad now. We really didn't recover from that (December) snow storm and then there was the double whammy of the holidays."

"We're scrambling to get back up and we hope February is better."

The goal for Thursday's drive is 175 pints, which would be more than what was collected at the fire department in drives last August and January 2000. Lindquist said those drives generated 162 and 168 pints, respectively.

Lindquist reported increased activity at four other open blood drives this month in Farmington Hills.

The Jan. 3 drive hosted at Holiday Inn, sponsored by the Farmington Freeway Industrial Park, generated 34 pints - up from 24 pints the previous drive.

The Jan. 7 drive at Nardin Park Methodist Church resulted in 57 pints. "That was a record drive, we normally

Please see BLOOD DRIVE, A3

Renovation plans upset



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDLER

Quick response: Farmington Hills firefighters made short work of a fire on Tall Timber Tuesday afternoon, near a home that is being renovated. Contractors discovered the blaze, which fire officials believe started in construction materials sitting next to the home. The cause of the fire hasn't been determined; it damaged wires leading from the ground into the electrical meter.

Please see REZONING, A2