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THE WEEK AHEAD

Hills City Council: *On the agenda for Monday's regular meeting, which begins at 7:30 p.m., is consideration of an ordinance to officially establish a Mayor's Youth Council, in cooperation with the City of Farmington, and transmittal of the city's Capital Improvement Plan for the next five years. The meeting will be held in council chambers at City Hall, on the corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads.*

MONDAY

Farmington Planning Commission: *On Monday night's agenda are a public hearing and consideration of special exemption for a frame/bump shop at 22855 Orchard Lake Road and a site and landscape plan for building addition and renovation of Grand Orchard Liquor, 22804 Orchard Lake Road. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. at Farmington City Hall, 23600 Liberty Street.*

TUESDAY

Radio Days: *"Ask the Professor" radio program will visit Mercy High, 29300 W. 11 Mile Road in Farmington Hills at 12:45 p.m. A panel of professors will take student questions about the City of Detroit, as part of the Detroit 300 celebration.*

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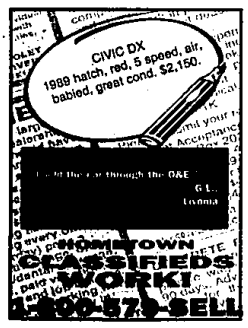

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'We're all doing this together'

Founders Festival organizers are reaching out to downtown business owners, many of whom were upset by last year's changes. Director Suzanne Lichtman hopes the optimistic spirit of cooperation will catch on

BY JONI HUBRED
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The dates and the name aren't the only things that have changed with this year's Founders Festival, held July 19-21 in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

At Wednesday night's Downtown Farmington Business Association meeting, merchants learned the festival has a new attitude as well, one that Executive Director Suzanne Lichtman hopes will be contagious. She asked for merchants' help in creating a new identity for the signature event, one that separates it from last year's problems and conflicts as well as the chamber of commerce's long-standing sponsorship.

"The way I'd like to see it ... the identity we're trying to create is one that will be enduring," Lichtman told the gathering of 10 downtown business owners. "This is a community event. It's owned and operated by the community."

The chamber of commerce and former director Jody Soronen ran the festival for years before a separate board was created. The board, in turn, hired Watts Up Inc., a marketing firm that has worked with events from the Plymouth Ice Festival to the Taylor Summer Festival.

However, many of the changes implemented last year caused a great deal of conflict, and merchants were among the most vocal critics. Lichtman said festival organizers want to get them back on board the bandwagon of support.

"Because this is occurring in your backyards, we want to involve all of you," she said.

Concerns about fees for parade par-

Please see FESTIVAL, A2

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER

Duelling bidders: *Connor Olson and Billy Giorgio competed for the auctioneer's attention at Stepping Stone's student auction, held Thursday in conjuction with the school's fund-raiser. Billy's high bid allowed him to " be the teacher for 30 minutes"*

Up for bids

Steppingstone kids enjoy their own 'auction'

BY TIM SMITH
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Students of Steppingstone Center for Gifted Education knew that, on Saturday night, their teachers and parents bid on gourmet meals, sports memorabilia and vacation packages during the 2001: Odyssey in Space auction at St. Mary's Cultural Center in Livonia.

But the youngsters weren't about to be denied on the bidding fun. They took part in their very own auction, Thursday afternoon outside the private school on Middlebelt in Farmington Hills.

Instead of full-course Italian dinners, vacation condo in Orlando, Fla. or movie-making collectibles signed by actor Billy Crystal (from the upcoming HBO baseball movie *61**), hot items at the students' auction included Harry Potter stationary, Pokemon trading cards and art kits.

There also were unusual items: lunch with Headmaster Kiyo Morse, 10 more minutes of recess and an opportunity to get out of a homework assignment – as long as it wasn't math.

Teacher Kristine Brennan, who coordinated the student's auction day, handled auctioneering duties from under the playground pavilion, keeping the bidding process flowing as youngsters held up their homemade bidding paddles (actually personalized paper plates with numbers and decorations on them).

The 50 or so items that were up for bid were so-called extras from the

Please see AUCTION, A4

Sold out Chamber eXpo 2001 opens April 11

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
SPECIAL WRITER

After a year's hiatus, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce has hit the ground running for its annual trade show, "eXpo 2001."

This business-to-business event, to be held April 11-12 at the William Costick Activities Center, will showcase more than 85 vendors, including Steppingstone School, The Print House, WJR Radio and the Farmington Laser Center.

Reconstructed from the Taste of Farmington, eXpo 2001 will demonstrate that the chamber's focus has changed over the years, said Ara Topouzian, director of programs and events.

"eXpo is marketed solely to business-to-business networking," Topouzian said. "The vendors are mostly brand new. We surveyed chamber members and they said that business-to-business is what they want. So that's what they're getting."

The chamber's goal is to service the chamber members.

"We want to walk away knowing that all our vendors were able to make some kind of contact with another business," Topouzian said. "We want to enrich the networking process for our members."

The event is sold out. In fact, the chamber sold more booths than anyone expected, which Topouzian said is an indicator this event will be successful.

From 5-9 p.m. on Wednesday, April 11, opening night will feature a VIP vendor preview reception catered by Marco's restaurant with music by Magic Touch. The event will provide vendors an opportunity to network or invite potential clients. The preview is open only to vendors, chambers members and guests.

From noon to 7 p.m. the following day, the public is invited to browse the

Please see CHAMBER, A2

School Board filings close April 9

The deadline to file nominating petitions for the June 11 Farmington school board election is 4 p.m. Monday, April 9.

Those deciding to drop out can do so no later than 4 p.m. Thursday, April 12, said Judy Steinhebel of the district's election office. Packages are available at the Administrative Center, 32500 Shiawassee.

For more information, call (248) 489-3341. Nominating petitions must have at least 20 signatures of registered voters.

Commissioners tackle sewers, technology

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW & JONI HUBRED
STAFF WRITERS

Both Oakland County commissioners who represent the Farmington/Farmington Hills area have been hard at work in their new terms, with goals they've carried forward and some new ideas for better access to county services.

David Moffitt

Former Farmington Hills city councilman and mayor Terry Sever is in the beginning of his second two-year term representing Commissioner District 19. Sever is chairman of the Republican Caucus, which comprises 18 of the commission's 25 commissioners.

While the position is partisan, he said, "There aren't many issues that have come up that are Democrat and Republican. Very little that we do is political."

Newly appointed to the Public Services Committee, Sever is quite concerned about the future of the county's sanitary sewer system. Calling it "a problem as big as roads," Sever said stormwater is getting into the sanitary system.

Terry Sever

Yet the county government can't afford to fix it alone. "We're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars," he said. "Just in Farmington Hills alone it could reach $300 million."

Sever said he will advocate for a study that recommends solutions. One possible solution is to build retention basins, one or two

Please see COUNTY, A4