

IN THE PAPER TODAY

Rolling: Two mobile recreation units are making the rounds. /A2

Pristine project: Thanks to the efforts of dedicated Eagle Scouts, a nature center behind Alameda Early Childhood Center is taking on a new, beautiful look. /A3

Go ahead: The Farmington Hills City Council gave preliminary approval to two new subdivisions. /A4

OPINION

The right thing: The honor of former Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi was the right thing to do. /A10

HOME TOWN LIFE

25 Years: The Center for New Thinking lecture series founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine marks a quarter of a century. /C7

ARTS & LEISURE

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Radio: Terry Gross, host of National Public Radio's afternoon show *Fresh Air* talks about her work and experiences. /B1

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CosMedic Laser Center seeks polished, "model type" clients and perform general office duties.

The ad worked well. I got lots of responses. It was well done! - Christie Houghton Farms

630-579-SELL

Revised 47th court site plan gets nod

BY ALICE ASHMORE
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The go-ahead was given Monday to present the final bids for construction on the new 47th District Court building, but council members are sharpening their pencils to try to eliminate some of the expense.



The revised site plan for the \$12.8 million project was approved during a joint meeting of the Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils.

"I'm very pleased with the action taken by council. It's given us the opportunity to move forward," said 47th District Court Administrator David Walsh.

Costs for the new court facility were projected to be \$10.7 million last November, but security concerns and

site plan changes have added an additional \$1.7 million to construction costs, Walsh said.

"The new site plan makes sense, but I am concerned about the cost. We're looking at every way to trim costs."

The majority of council's questions regarded the extension of a security tunnel for prisoner transfer from the Farmington Hills jail to the new court building.

The tunnel extension is projected to cost \$547,000, bringing the total cost of the tunnel to nearly a million dollars.

"A \$1 million dollar tunnel seems very excessive to me," said Farmington council member JoAnne McShane.

"I like the idea of a sharp pencil (to control costs)," said Farmington Mayor Bill Hartsock.

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff cited the safety of residents in surrounding neighborhoods as a top priority.

"In the past 25 years I can remember

two or three occasions where prisoners have run from an officer or managed to get out of a car. The safety of the community is paramount."

Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates recalled that one such escape required an officer to use his gun to stop the escape.

Monal Incorporated Construction Services of Farmington is supervising the construction of the project.

John Allen of Monal said, "We started out looking at Southfield as a model. It makes prisoner transfer almost invisible."

The tunnel would connect directly to the holding cells at the jail and would be monitored by closed-circuit security cameras.

"The tunnel makes it more secure — the less you have to transport prisoners, the better," Walsh said after the meeting.

He said that Farmington Hills Chief Bill Dwyer had expressed security con-



cerns about prisoner transfer without the extension.

Farmington Hills typically bears 88.

Please see COURT, A4

No fertilizer please: She takes natural approach



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEHMERT

Not her style: Hills resident Sherri Cohen refuses to use chemicals on her lawn, much to the dismay of neighbors.

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM
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The beauty of a lush, green, weedless lawn that resembles the green of a favorite golf course is only blades deep.

That's according to Sherri Cohen, a Farmington Hills resident who expressed concerns about the environmental costs of lush, green landscapes. Fertilizers and other lawn chemicals get washed into storm drains and could ultimately wind up in people's drinking water, she told Hills City Council last week.

The chemicals may also be ingested by house pets and wildlife or trod upon by barefooted toddlers.

"I've come to learn that that beauty is an illusion," said Cohen.

Hills Mayor Nancy Bates suggested scheduling a study session of city council at a later date to discuss the matter. She said Cohen would be invited to speak at the meeting.

Cohen became concerned about the impact of putting chemicals on her lawn and began reading up on it. As a result, this year, Cohen said she decided not to fertilize — nor apply pesticides to her lawn, which means that other plants besides grass have taken up residence.

"It's just one little thing that I can do," Cohen said of her lawn rebellion. She said some municipalities are even looking at promoting a "no lawn" approach, which favors naturally growing plants instead of grass, which is either planted or imported as pieces of

Please see LAWN, A3

Up in smoke



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARBER

Gone: On Monday Farmington Hills firefighters torched the building that formerly housed Special Services.

Water, sewer rates on the rise in city

BY SUE BUCK
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Farmington residents will pay more for water and sewer due to increased costs by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department.

The total water and sewer rate combined charge per 1,000 gallons will be \$4.95, up from \$4.65, a nearly 7-percent increase.

The average water and sewer customer is billed for about 23,000 gallons a quarter, said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

This means those customers will pay an additional \$7 per quarter, he said.

"The metropolitan Detroit area is one of the lowest across the nation," Lauhoff said.

Another charge to all suburban Detroit customers not based on amount of usage is called a "Long Term Combined Sewer Overflow."

This charge, which started last year, is developed by a formula for each community and pays that portion of the costs for Detroit to eliminate the combined sewer system.

A federal court order mandated this charge to pay for the rebuilding of the Detroit system to build facilities so that sewage never overflows into the river, Lauhoff said.

Because money hasn't been put back into the Detroit infrastructure as it

FARMINGTON

■ 'The metropolitan Detroit area is one of the lowest across the nation.'

—Frank Lauhoff
—Farmington City Manager

should have, Lauhoff predicts up to double-digit increases in future years.

The cost to each Farmington customer will be \$5.54 per quarter for fiscal year 2001-2002. "This cost will be adjusted annually," he said.

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department raised the water rates all suburban users.

"Detroit has raised the wholesale water rate for Farmington from \$7.33 per thousand cubic feet to \$8.15 for an 11-percent increase," Lauhoff said. "Wholesale sewer rates increased from \$6.46 to \$6.66, a 3-percent increase."

Farmington is served by two systems, Lauhoff said. Oakland County serves a small portion of Farmington's west side.

Oakland County also buys its water from Detroit, Lauhoff said.

Oakland County increased its sewer disposal cost to Farmington from \$8.82 per thousand cubic feet to \$10.17, an increase of 15 percent, he said.

