

No charges in youth's death

By RON GARBINSKI

Criminal charges won't be pressed against the Farmington School District or its employees for the Jan. 9 electrocution death of Robert Kourjian, an eighth-grade student at East Junior High School.

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, after considering "the toughest decision" he has ever faced, decided not to file charges.

Criminal charges of involuntary manslaughter were considered during the prosecutor's exhaustive two-month examination of the electrocution evidence.

Patterson didn't rule on civil charges of neglect because such charges only can be filed by the youth's parents.

It is the position of the Oakland County prosecutor's office that there was no criminal misconduct upon which to predicate a prosecution, Patterson said.

"For criminal prosecution to be initiated under the present state of the law, it would be necessary for this office to find that the death of Robert Kourjian was as a result of wanton or willful misconduct or a reckless disregard for the safety of the deceased in order to supply the requisite criminal intent," the prosecutor continued.

The evidence in this case does not show such conduct.

Robert, the 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. William Kourjian of 3000 Fiddlers Green in Farmington, was electrocuted when he attempted to unplug an ungrounded metal buffer in an East shop class.

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Fire chief gets tapped, Holko remains cop boss

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

The Farmington Hills volunteer fire department has a new full-time boss.

John Van De Voort, 37, formerly of the Detroit Fire Department, was hired by city council to oversee the 10-man squad.

City Manager George Majoros expressed confidence in the new administrator.

"I feel confident that he will provide the type of leadership that the department deserves," said Majoros.

The guy is technically competent. He was the most capable person we've gotten to apply for the job. With his personality he will be able to work well with the volunteers," said Majoros.

Van De Voort reported directly to Majoros. Before Van De Voort's employment, the volunteers were under the jurisdiction of Public Safety Director Ronald Holko.

HOLKO will remain as director of the police department.

Van De Voort's appointment comes on the heels of a squabble between the volunteer department and Holko. Some of the volunteers expressed a lack of confidence in Holko's leadership, saying that he showed little interest in the fire department.



JOHN VanDeVOORT

The uneasy relationship reached a head recently when Holko called some members of the volunteer force members "bunch of incompetents," a top professional.

"Now I've got a guy who will spend a lot of time with the firemen," said Majoros.

The charter calls for a department of

public safety. Positions such as public safety director and fire chief can be created and abolished as the council sees fit.

"BEFORE HIRING the fire chief we had one guy wearing three hats," said Majoros. Holko oversaw the police, fire and human rescue services.

As I see it now we have a director of police and a fire chief. Neither one has authority over the other," he said.

I have thought from the very beginning that the fire department was a good group which deserved full-time leadership.

Van De Voort has been involved in fire-fighting for 41 years, becoming a volunteer when he was 18 years old. He was with the Detroit Fire Department for 20 years before retiring. He was executive secretary of the Michigan Firefighters Training Council for one year.

During his tenure as executive secretary, he set up a number of college courses for full-time and part-time fire personnel, said Majoros.

While in Detroit, he was chief of training for eight years.

Sterling Heights hired Van De Voort as a consultant to the fire department. He joined that job in January of this year, after which time Majoros approached him about the job in Farmington Hills.

New projects aid police

Farmington Hills Public Safety Department accomplished several major projects during 1973 that make the police unit better able to cope with threats of increasing crime, department officials said.

One of these projects was the completion of the digital radio communication system, MOBAT.

This system is a base digital transmission system that reduces voice transmission and provides more air time for other emergency relays.

Since these police departments share the same radio frequency with the Hills, it is necessary to utilize all methods to reduce frequency overloads. Public Safety Director Ronald Holko explained in his department's annual report.

The MOBAT also provides vehicle identification for every police radio broadcast while at the same time recording the vehicle's status, date and number.

Because there aren't enough patrol units available for the afternoon and night shifts, the department started a community service officer program (CSO) to help assist citizens and take more crime reports.

Holko said in the 1973 crime report.

THE CSO's job frees regular duty officers for more patrol activity and to handle the more serious crimes.

The CSO's are in uniform and drive marked vehicles around the residential areas acting as a crime deterrent.

The program is similar to the department's phased out radar program and is funded under Federal CETA funds.

Another major project that took to the streets last year was the Special Patrol Operations Team. Their function is to patrol the high crime areas to help reduce burglaries and other crimes.

According to Holko, the results of this team are exceptional and has become a regular operational unit of the police department.

The Total Area Coverage system, TAC, for public safety radio communications will be installed in the department's remodeled offices and made operational by April 1, 1974.

The system consists of satellite receivers located throughout the city providing total reception for all police radios, including the hand-held models.

Another major project that has been undertaken this year is the first floor remodeling of the police building.

This remodeling will provide better utilization of existing space and present a more professional image to citizens while helping to improve police morale, Holko explained.

IN ADDITION to the major projects, the department's personnel also received more than 1,774 hours of formal police training in supervision, investigation and education.

Police officers received 10,300 hours of in-service training during 1973 in all aspects of law enforcement. As part of the in-service program, four lieutenants, three sergeants and six patrolmen were certified by the state as breathalyzer operators.

Holko also presented six police officers

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If millage fails
Consequences devastating

By RON GARBINSKI

The Farmington School District would lose \$1.9 million if some voters fail to renew four mills of operating revenue in the April 4 special millage election, school administrators say.

Faced with this loss, the district would be forced to cut programs and lay off hundreds of school employees in making ends meet.

This would be in addition to cuts already made after the governor slashed state school aid to the district earlier this year.

For the 1973-74 school year the district's expenses totaled \$23,107,352. For next year, the district estimates its expenditures will reach \$25,140,764.

That's \$1,960,512 more for next year than the district will spend for the present school year.

While the district awaits the millage election results, it also must comply with the new Single Business Tax which requires funding for state schools.

As a result of this new law, personal business inventories have been removed from tax rules for 1974.

Under the law, the district's total state-allocated valuation, \$29.5 million, was reduced to \$13,140 for the 1974-75 academic year.

Another factor that has a double whammy effect on the district is Section 143 of the State Aid Act, says Dick Wallick, a converted resident and member of the Yes, Kids Count in Farmington, a committee that is seeking passage of the April 4 millage renewal.

"THIS SECTION 143 allows us to receive some of the funds lost through the single business tax. But it also has several catches to it," Wallick says.

Section 143 says that to receive any funds through the bill, the Farmington School District must lose at least the same amount of operating funds it lost for the 1973-74 school year.

If the district fails to pass the four-mill April 4, it would cause the district

to lose any funds provided under Section 143.

This would be in addition to the \$1.9 million loss if the four-mill renewal is defeated.

Section 143 compels the school district to defray the students' transportation. The district would be able to receive any reduction in state aid only if it can show that it has a difficult time trying to explain the cost.

Defeat of the millage would be disastrous for the district, officials said. District leaders concerned citizens and members of the Yes, Kids Count committee.

The district would be able to receive any reduction in state aid only if it can show that it has a difficult time trying to explain the cost.

If it failed to pass the millage, the school district would be forced to cut programs and lay off hundreds of school employees in making ends meet.

Some people in the district probably are wondering if their property valuations have gone up this year, which will put the school district in a better financial position, says Holko.

But it is a strange situation. When some residents experience increases in their property valuations, the school district has a tax base as the decrease in the Millage tax because of the Single Business Tax, the current law.

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