

## As warning against tornado in Hills

# Council questions effectiveness of sirens

By RON GARDINSKI

Members of the Farmington Hills City Council split Monday night on a proposal to activate civil defense and fire sirens as warnings for area residents during severe weather.

Oakland County Department of Public Services recently presented a plan to the city—as well as to all county communities—that would implement uniform use and activation of sirens in the event of a tornado.

"The purpose of sounding this signal is to alert the citizens of your community to obtain further information from either local radio or television," said Oakland's public service director John Dent in a letter to the city council.

After discussing the plan at its meeting

Monday night, the council decided to table the plan until City Manager George Majors looks into the feasibility and effectiveness of siren warnings in Farmington Hills.

"I'm of the opinion that sounding the sirens will have two effects on the residents of our city," said council member Joan Dudley.

"EITHER PEOPLE will panic or they will ignore the sirens. I think it's a waste of time and money and is just adding to noise pollution," she continued.

"If some people are so concerned about tornadoes, why don't they just turn on their radios when the weather looks threatening?"

"We all know spring and summer is a bad time for tornadoes.

"Take my own children, for example I

know they are going to panic no matter what I have told them about the sirens sounding," she said.

"If we're not there to tell them what to do, I think a lot of people will panic."

Council member Joanne Smith disagreed with Mrs. Dudley and supported the need for implementing the warning system in the community.

"I'm concerned that a tornado might hit somewhere and we won't be aware of it," said Mrs. Smith. "Our families might be affected or something might happen to them and we won't even know about it."

"I'm concerned (at this can happen anywhere around here just as it did in West Bloomfield."

"The purpose of this warning is to alert citizens to turn on their radios and be alert for tornadoes."

Mrs. Smith said many area residents called her to find out what the city council was doing about warning the community of tornadoes.

"I think this plan is worth our consid-

eration. The people in the city that I have talked to are concerned. I can't see where it will cost millions of dollars to take effect," Mrs. Smith said, "but first let's see how effective it can be."

The siren warning recommended by the county would be a three-to-five-minute steady blast during a tornado watch.

In the event of a prolonged tornado watch period, the sirens would sound the three-to-five-minute steady blast at least once every hour.

During a tornado warning, the same steady blast would be used.

A tornado watch is when conditions are right for a tornado. A warning is in effect when a tornado has been sighted in the area.

"All the warning systems in the world wouldn't be as effective as we want them to be," Mrs. Dudley continued. "Michigan has been hit once and I think we should go with the numbers and say that we won't be hit again."

"If tornadoes become a more common occurrence in the future, then maybe we

can adopt this plan. But right now, I don't think it's worth it."

"Before we adopt a proposal like this, we have to look at the numbers, expenses and what it will do psychologically to the community," Mrs. Dudley explained.

BEFORE IMPLEMENTING the siren plan, Mayor Earl Oppenheimer said the council should ask the administration to find out more about what the siren system might entail.

"I find it difficult to agree with the type of warning system recommended by the county," he said. "Every hour that siren blasts might cause more conservatism than anything else."

"I think if we just blasted the siren during a warning, it would be a lot better than having it during a watch, too," he continued.

"I think we should first find out what using the system entails, and then we could make a better decision on the plan."

When asked about installation of the system, Majors said the city would be able

to adopt its present three sirens in particular meet with the county's recommendations.

He added that the city would have to purchase one or more sirens to cover the community effectively.

"How much of the city to be covered with the sirens is up to the city council," Majors said.

"We don't have 36 square miles of coverage with the present system. More sirens would have to be installed if we are to join Oakland County in this plan."

THE HILLS' present warning system—the old fire alert siren—is activated from the police station, and Majors expressed concern about what would happen when the sirens start blasting.

"The police switchboard probably would be swamped with calls asking what the sirens meant," Majors said. "Residents would be asking if there still is any danger and many of them probably wouldn't even have their radios on."

"During the tornado in West Bloomfield, our switchboard was jammed for about 1½ hours with residents asking about the tornado."

"So you can just imagine what it would be like with sirens going," the city manager said.

In considering the proposal, Majors said the council should consider the importance of uniformity throughout the county when implementing a siren warning system.

"The confusion would drive us crazy if every city had a different warning," he said. "So we must do something that would be the same as everyone else."

There must be conformity and that's why the county came to us about their plan," Majors concluded.

Councilman Robert McConnell thought the council hadn't given the matter enough consideration before deciding to install the warning system in the city.

"THIS SHOULD go back to the county for more consideration and planning," he said. "I argue that there would be nothing but confusion if we started blasting this siren."

The council finally agreed the proposal should be examined further. They asked Majors to find out what other communities use the warning, how often they have used it and if it has any effect on alerting residents to the tornado.

"Let's talk to communities that do use the warning system and see how it works," Mrs. Dudley concluded. "We don't know if the sirens actually can prevent loss of lives, so let's find out first before we invest in such a warning system."

## Hills probes voter turnout

Since low voter participation is always a problem, especially in local elections, the Farmington Hills City Council has decided to do something about improving voter turnout.

At its meeting Monday night, the council voted to form a voter participation committee that would look into ways of increasing voter turnout.

The committee will consist of a nine-member steering board appointed by the mayor and a general committee of interested citizens.

The proposal to form the committee was presented to the council by the Farmington Democratic Club because it felt low voter participation is hindering elections.

"The Farmington Democratic Club recommends that the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills establish committees for the purpose of coming up with recommendations for improved voter participation in elections, particularly those at the local level," Aldo Vagnoni, chairman of the Democratic Club told the city council.

mitter to those persons appointed by Mayor Earl Oppenheimer and selected from area political groups. It would leave the general committee open for residents who would volunteer for such activity.

There is always a problem of getting people involved in elections," Council Member Joan Dudley said. "The more residents we get involved, then the more people will come out to vote because they want to see the results of their work."

While explaining his club's proposal to the council, Vagnoni pointed out the council must do something to increase election turnout.

"While it may be futile, at least we should try," he said. "As you know, there was only about a 30 to 35 per cent turnout in a lot of our elections."

Voters have turnout at times as high as 80 per cent for presidential elections and 60 to 70 per cent for local and state elections," he continued.

But I think we should do better than only 11 per cent as was the case in the last election here in Farmington Hills," the club chairman explained.

The city council should look at the low voter turnout and make suggestions how we can improve it. If we set up this committee it should look at the community and see how it can improve voter education and remind residents of elections," Vagnoni concluded.



In town

Farmington-area residents should watch where they drive on Grand River during the next few weeks as construction workers prepare to raise manholes and prepare curbs for resurfacing of the roadway between I-96 west of Middle Belt and Drake Road. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

## Off on a tangent

# Sailors have more fun

By RON GARDINSKI

It was just like in the movies, offering the same suspense, terror and excitement. And being the advocate of any spon-taneous adventure, I seized the opportunity to enjoy an afternoon out with two Farmington policemen.

Now, just for a moment, share with me this storybook ending.

There he stood for a brief moment that afternoon, eyes gazing across the lake from behind his wheel, taking in every detail of the scene before us. Gosh, experienced, the perfect skipper of any ship—Sgt. Ray Cranston of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

Next to him stood his first mate, at least for this voyage—Sgt. John Maxwell of the Farmington Public Safety Department.

And then there was his crew, off again on another tangent, sitting back and just observing the whole situation—Farmington Observer & Eccentric's roving reporter.



BELOW DECK were John's daughter Joy and her two friends, John and Bonnie, enjoying their first excursion on a Great Lakes sailboat.

What started to be a relaxing two-hour sail to Ray's new sailboat mooring offered us more than that. It was the perfect adventure to cure the mid-week blues.

At first it was overcast, but that soon passed. Weather reports indicated conditions would change, allowing us an easy breeze for a smooth sail into Ray's new home port.

Sails rigged and a seven-knot wind to our backs, the captain and his crew set out. For a while it was fun, leaving back and taking in the desires of us, only evening cruise on Lake St. Clair.

The captain, standing boldly behind his wheel, shouted commands. He soon articulated trouble. He seemed it as did his first mate.

And then unexpectedly for us, it hit. Clear one minute and the next we were unable to see 30 feet.

Our captain became our only hope. Our boat began to shake with the waves. East surrounded us. Waves were topside the foredeck.

But the captain and his first mate didn't panic. Toned by years of experience exposed to danger, they took it all in stride. Cranston was behind the wheel. Maxwell worked the jib lines and the crew assisted.

Somewhere it seems different looking at the water while sailing along at a 45-degree angle with the sun warming the lake. Somehow as we readied ourselves for what was to come, it seemed so totally different that afternoon with the white railing and clanging of the lines against the boat's frame.

Different from any other sailing adventure this moving report had ever encountered.

With the waves pounding against the sailboat and the winds pulling the sails away from the ship, Cranston gave the order to let go our lines. For several moments, it

chief on course, the first mate and crew attempted to bring down the jib.

As I leaned the line, Maxwell pulled in the sail. It was then fear first entered my mind, saying that John wouldn't be blown away into the 40-degree lake.

But John managed to bring it down and we stuffed it through the forehatch and made our way back to the cockpit to take over, continued.

Down into the boom and mast, the captain shifted to us. He was no more than five feet away but we were beyond the reach of his voice in this weather and noise. Gosh, again we managed.

Somewhere, the O.J. Navy saying, "Sailors have a lot of fun," kept ringing in my mind.

Cranston handled his ship and crew expertly, giving the kids something to keep their minds off the rough waters and tornado that the Coast Guard apparently reported to have crashed our path moments ahead.

As I look back, I was 45 minutes late reporting to the first mate's house before shipping out. That night when I returned home, I thought about being late.

WE MIGHT have taken the tornado straight on if we left earlier, but then again we might have sailed untouched if I was on time. Who knows?

As quickly as it came upon us, it was gone. Waves shallowed, the winds dropped off and the stars came out.

Again—just like in the movies—one man's your blood was racing through your body and the next a plane spots us coming out of the storm center, possibly wondering how we managed to leave the storm but we did.

Our captain's experienced crew pulled out port much more easily in the ways of the lake, and back.

As Cranston said when we left for home that evening, "If we can weather that adventure, we can handle anything."

And the captain doctored his boat, ready for his next sailing suspense on the Great Lakes.

And the first mate went home with tales of terror to tell.

And the kids left wallowing with excitement of having something to talk about in school next week. They had been brave.

And the roving reporter left, looking for his next spontaneous adventure.

### Mother's Day advice

Mother's Day greetings won't reach her before May 9 if the address on the envelope is incomplete, incorrect or illegible.

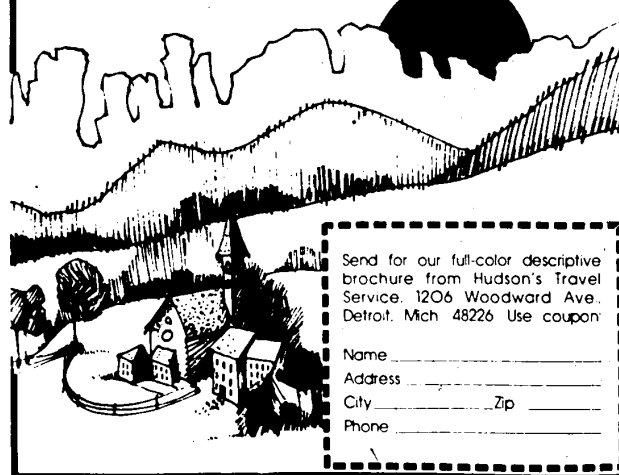
"It may seem strange, but each year the postal service receives thousands of Mother's Day cards and packages that can't be delivered," as addressed or sent back because if he isn't a return address," Postman J. Kenneth S. Harris says.

"Check the address, don't write the word, 'city' in an address as a short cut for the actual city name. Be sure you have the right ZIP code and proper postage," he advises.

## Have an Austrian Alpine Adventure during exciting Oktoberfest via Hudson's Travel Service.

Visit the Tyrolean Alps, breathtaking Sound of Music country, during the festive Oktoberfest celebration. You'll leave Detroit on September 23 and return October 1. For just \$549, your trip will include round trip jet fare to Munich via Pan Am, all transfers, 1st class hotel in Kitzbuhel, full Austrian breakfast and dinner daily, tour hosts, all taxes and gratuities. Special optional features include a full day and evening in Munich celebrating Oktoberfest, visits to Berchtesgaden, Salzburg, the birth place of Mozart, Innsbruck, plus mountain climbing, swimming, tennis, golf and above all relaxation. Use your convenient Hudson's Charge if you wish. Call Hudson's Downtown, 223-2300; Northland, 569-5153; Oakland, 585-8020; Westland, 425-3386. You'll have a super time!

## hudson's



Send for our full-color descriptive brochure from Hudson's Travel Service, 1206 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Mich 48226 Use coupon

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_