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School board goals outlined

By STEVE BARNABY

Farmington editor
Middle schools, study of enrollment trends and a revamped budgetary system are among the goals set by Farmington School District Board President Michael Shpiece.

In a presentation made at last week's board meeting, Shpiece outlined an eight-point program which the educational legislators will address this year.

Before naming board priorities, Shpiece lauded the recent record set by the board, which he said is one of which the community could be proud.

"To those who scoff at our businesslike, efficient manner, I can only say that over the past few years this board and administration has a record — not just rhetoric. And it's a record that I believe this community can be proud of," he said.

Goals set by Shpiece are:

- Implementation of the middle school.
- Successful contract negotiations with the Farmington Education Association (FEA).
- Setting up a budget system so as to increase the opportunity of the board to make meaningful budgetary decisions.
- Vehicle replacement and traffic safety study.
- Revision of high school graduation requirements.

• Improvement of community-board communications.

• Investigation of enrollment trends after the fourth Friday student count. The fourth Friday count is conducted at the end of the first month of school in the fall. It determines the amount of state and federal aid the district will receive.

Shpiece noted a "dramatic change" in the school board over the years.

"We have abandoned the politics of confrontation. But although we don't make a lot of noise, we are hardworking," he said.

In the last year, the board has come under some public criticism for its low-key approach to the problems of previous years when the board, composed

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— Michael Shpiece

of different members, was well-known for its lengthy meetings and vocal debates.

Shpiece contrasted those times with what he listed as significant accomplishments of the present board.

Among those things he listed as accomplishments were:

- Establishment of the intellectually gifted and computer math programs.
- A reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio.
- Continued work in improving equality between the sexes — especially in counseling and athletics.
- The Early Childhood Education Program serving 250 youngsters.
- Continued expansion of special education.

• Voluntary millage reduction of 0.4.

• Shift to the middle school concept. The middle school concept has become a key part of Farmington's future educational plan, according to school officials. After a task force study, the concept was endorsed to combat the trend of declining enrollments.

Under the middle schools, junior high schools would be phased out. Students in the 6th through 8th grades would attend the same schools. Ninth graders would attend the high schools.

The shift to middle schools, said Shpiece, will improve use of facilities and improve student education.

Tomorrow night the board curriculum committee will study proposed curricular plans for the middle schools.



A vanishing craft

Michael Vizzini, Farmington watchmaker and fun-loving character. To read about Vizzini, turn to repairman, plies his trade proudly and with a bit of Page 3A. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Confusion clouding gem theft

By C.J. RISAK

Last week's Farmington Diamond Boutique jewel robbery is still baffling police — despite two arrests.

Although Farmington police arrested Pamela Ann Schannault, 18, and Delford Holcomb, 23, both of Westland, last Tuesday for the robbery of the store, at 37105 Grand River, a third person, thought to be the driver of the getaway car in the theft, is being sought.

And there are now conflicting views in the number of jewels taken. According to Farmington Police Detective Tom Daniels, at the time of the robbery store operator Bob Miller thought approximately 150-175 pieces of jewelry had been stolen.

When the police arrested Miss Schannault and Holcomb, they thought they had recovered all the stolen objects. But Miller now says the amount of recovered material totals only about 25 percent of what was taken. Daniels said, "I'm totally confused," Daniels said. "I would think he is confused, too. We recovered 186 pieces that were stolen. We are still investigating."

At the time of the robbery, Daniels requested an inventory of all the stolen items. Miller, according to Daniels, gave him a set of "pictures of 385 rings." Miller told Daniels that only some of these were taken. Daniels asked for an inventory of items Monday.

DANIELS HAD RECEIVED no such inventory when the arrest was made last Tuesday.

Miller said Friday that "about \$182,000 was still not accounted for — \$247,000 was stolen." The recovery, then, was only about \$65,000.

The Diamond Boutique was not insured against theft, carrying only a liability insurance for customers. Miller said the reason for this was to keep prices down.

"Our prices will beat anybody's in town," Miller said. "If we add insurance our prices will go up."

Miller also said that such a practice (not having theft insurance) was common for jewelers, and that even some of the big chains "don't carry theft insurance."

However, a check with a Farmington-based jeweler and a local insurance company conflicts with Miller's claim. The jeweler said that "if you called 800 jewelers, six might not have it (insurance against theft), and that would be a large percentage."

"Meanwhile, Farmington police will 'continue to investigate' the third suspect and the possibility of any jewels that may not have been recovered, according to Daniels.

Lawyers learn

How to defend the drunk driver

By CRAIG PIECHURA

The friends of Eddie Coyle helped him get drunk Friday as a public service.

The Institute of Continuing Legal Research (ICLR) sponsored a seminar for lawyers on the "Defense of Drunk Driving Cases in Michigan" at Southfield's Michigan Inn. Lawyers heard speeches from three attorneys in the state — Michael Morgan of Troy, Robert Larin of Birmingham and Thomas Casselman of Marquette — who specialize in defending drunk drivers.

At the session, the three lawyers taught other members of the legal profession — including prosecuting attorneys and judges — loopholes in the law and contradictory statutes that they use to get drunk driving cases dismissed or reduced.

As a form of entertainment or visual aid, the lawyers convinced Coyle, a former Department of Corrections officer, to drink VO Manhattan cocktails all afternoon. When finished, he was well over the legal definition of drunk — registering three different figures on the Breathalyzer test — but could perform all common sobriety tests like walking a straight line and touching his nose.

Dr. Edgar Kivela, a Breathalyzer expert employed by the Michigan State Police, administered a battery of additional tests designed to judge the effect of alcohol on Coyle's physical and mental condition when asked to quickly perform multiple tasks.

ATTORNEYS shelled out \$35 for a

300-page manual outlining ways to weave around the law and "present a vigorous defense of your client." They also heard a sobering talk on the extent of alcohol abuse in a speech by Hugh Vale, director of the Brighton Hospital for alcohol treatment. The lawyers admitted they had an obligation to recommend help for the repeat drinking offender.

Larin, one of three authors of the legal text, admitted that he is known as a "hired gun" specializing in defending drunk drivers. But Larin said he has no pangs of conscience keeping him awake nights.

"I don't mind finding new loopholes and educating all facets of law enforcement in the shortcomings of our laws," Larin said. "I am there (at the seminar) to teach them how to get clients off. As an attorney I must present that kind of legal defense or I'm guilty of fraud. I must make sure my client gets justice through the laws as they stand. Let the jury worry about whether ultimate justice was served."

Larin said the book was written and the seminar was scheduled at seven locations in the state because too many attorneys think defending a drunk driver is a routine matter. As a result, Larin said, he finds defects in 70 percent of the cases and sees convictions in cases that could have been dismissed with one sentence from the defense counsel.

The attorneys didn't give tips on how to drink and drive or pretend to know sure-fire secrets for winning cases. They explained that too many different

variables and personalities make such generalizations impossible. But Larin, in his speech, told attorneys to look closely at a few key areas.

According to Larin, many cities, including Clawson, Novi, Bloomfield Township and Troy (up until last month), improperly adopted the state's motor vehicle code as their own.

"THE MANDATORY rules for adop-

tion and amendment are highly technical," Larin writes in his book, "and often have not been followed properly in the more than 400 communities that have adopted the code. Defense counsel should be aware of these possible defects because they create a subject matter jurisdiction problem that can result in the dismissal of even the most serious drunk driving cases."

Larin said he has had cases thrown

out of court because a city publishes a notice stating that the municipality is adopting the state's Uniform Traffic Code, or an amendment to the state code, but then fails to publish another notice announcing that the ordinance is in effect and copies of the traffic code can be obtained from the local clerk.

Larin has sent his client to the clerk's office asking for a copy of the (Continued on page 6A)



This is a composite drawing of a man suspected of several larcenies in the Farmington Racquetball Club. The suspect is described as a male in his early 20s, with sandy blond hair and a husky build.

Racquet club thief foils female captor

A young man suspected of several thefts at the Farmington Racquet Club was almost caught by a female employee last Tuesday.

Jeanne Carpenter of Farmington found the man going through the lockers at the club, located at 34200 West Nine Mile Road. When she challenged him, he tried to escape, but the 5-foot-5 Carpenter grabbed him and yelled for help, said police.

Despite the presence of two men who had earlier reported to Miss Carpenter the suspect's activities, she received no help. The suspect, a six-foot, 180-pounder, finally broke away from Miss Carpenter's grasp and escaped on a 10-speed bicycle, heading east on Nine Mile.

"I would say that within the last

year there have been more than 50 larcenies (at the Farmington Racquet Club)," said Detective Tom Daniels of the Farmington police department.

"(The thief) goes into the men's locker room and uses some type of tool to break into lockers. He then takes wallets or watches, whatever he can conceal and take out of the locker room."

"As little as \$5 has been taken, and as much as \$300-\$400."

The suspect is described as a white male in his early 20s, with a husky build and tan complexion. He has sandy blond hair.

The police, with the help of a composite drawing furnished by Miss Carpenter, are still investigating.

Homeowners group sponsors aid dance

"The Eldrege Dance" is being sponsored by the Section 36 Homeowners Association on Aug. 23 at 8 p.m. in the Knights of Columbus Hall, 21900 Middlebelt. Tickets are \$5. Tickets to win a "basket of cheer" are \$1. The dance is being held to aid the Eldrege family, who were turned out of their home last month. Dance tickets can be purchased at the Chamber of Commerce, 23715 Farmington, Farm-

ington Hills City Hall, finance department, 31555 Eleven Mile; and the Farmington Observer, 23552 Farmington Road. Tickets also will be sold at the door the night of the dance. Direct donations by check or money order should be marked "special" and be made payable to the "Section 36 Homeowners Association" and mailed to Leona Layland, treasurer, 21313 Whittington, Farmington Hills 48074.

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CALENDAR PUBLISHED

School is closer to starting than you could believe. To see when your children should register for classes and when the first day of school begins, turn to Page 2A.