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Youths tell of brawl with Farmington police

By MARY GNIEWEK

Three Farmington Hills teenagers claim they were punched, kicked and choked by guests in an unprovoked attack during an off-duty Farmington policeman's party Sept. 15.

The brawl contributed to the resignation of Farmington Public Safety Director Dan Byrnes, who admitted last week he was disillusioned by a lack of cooperation from officers involved in the incident.

Byrnes said he was frustrated in his attempts to conduct an investigation.

The youths, John Williams, 19, his sister Mary, 15, and a friend, Bob Cote, 19, say they entered the Farmington Hills house because they mistook it for another party in the area.

The party, at Officer Chuck Lee's Dohany Street residence, was a farewell bid for Officer Ray Lardie, who moved to California. At least seven Farmington police officers were present when the youths arrived about midnight.

The three say several of Lee's guests grabbed them in the basement after a woman there said, "Who are they? Get

them out of my house."

According to Miss Williams, a sophomore at Farmington High School, the three were pushed outside to the front lawn. There, she said, her brother, a factory worker, and Cote were beaten while she stood nearby at Cote's 1971 Mercury.

She said as many as five men were scuffling with her brother at once. She also said three of four men were on Cote, a 5-foot-8-inch, 135-pound youth.

"I YELLED at them to stop," Miss Williams said. "One came at me. He

started choking me and wouldn't let go. I started to cry.

"John said 'Let her go.' He (the man) let me go and started choking John."

The Williams said one guest poured beer inside the car and then told John to sit in it. The youths also said the car was kicked and dented in the left quarter panel.

The Williams and Cote left. Mary was dropped off at the home of a friend. Then the two youths assembled about a dozen male friends, including Cote's brothers, armed themselves with baseball bats and clubs and returned to

Lee's front porch at 2 a.m. with the party still in progress.

Williams, a factory worker, said one of the youths returning to the party, whose father is a Farmington police officer, recognized Lee when he came to the door.

The youths dropped the bats and other weapons and left.

"When we found out they were police, we weren't going to fight the law," Williams explained. "When we first went there, I thought they were drunk rednecks."

Officer Lee told the Observer

Wednesday that there was a scuffle between some of the party guests and the youths. However, Lee disputed the youths' claim that they entered the house by accident.

"AS SOON as they entered the basement, I asked them if they were guests of someone at the party," he said. "The second guy said 'Dad.' I don't know anyone by that name so I told them to leave."

"They didn't want to go right off. It seems they wanted to engulf in some (Continued on page 4A)

Deadman to head cop shop

By MARY GNIEWEK

In a change of policy, City Manager Bob Deadman said Friday he will ask the Farmington City Council to appoint himself, instead of Lt. John Santomauro, to act as interim public safety director until a replacement is found for Dan Byrnes.

That differs from Deadman's Oct. 1 letter to city council in which he stated the deputy director would operate the department until a new public safety director is appointed.

Deadman said Friday he thought it was in the best interest of the city that he fill in as temporary chief while an investigation which prompted Byrnes' resignation continues.

The investigation into a brawl involving police and teenagers during a Sept. 15 party at the Farmington Hills home of off-duty Farmington police officer Chuck Lee was revived by Byrnes late last week.

Byrnes said his resignation, which takes effect Oct. 12, was prompted by a lack of police officers' cooperation in his first investigation.

Santomauro, who is second in command of the 21-officer Farmington police force, was at the party when the incident occurred but did not inform Byrnes of the fight.

According to police who were at the party, three teenagers tried to crash the party and were evicted. They admit some officers scuffled with two of the youths.

But the youths claim they were roughed up and their car was damaged when they entered the policeman's party because they thought it was the site of another party.

WEDNESDAY BYRNES told the Observer the investigation was over because he could not prove or disprove the charges. But Thursday he questioned the three teens who were involved in the incident.

The youths, Bob Cote, 19, John Williams, 19, and his sister, Mary, 15, were interviewed separately in half-hour segments in their Farmington Hills homes by Chief Byrnes. An attorney accompanied Byrnes.

Though the three could not identify their alleged attackers, Byrnes said he would return with photographs, according to John Williams.

Farmington Councilman William Hartsock said one police officer, whom Hartsock did not name, already has been verbally reprimanded by the department pending completion of the investigation.

"I find this whole situation incredible," Hartsock said. "As soon as we get the full report, we will decide what reprimands need to be taken."

"Nobody's talking as far as the people at the party are concerned. No one wants to point a finger. They are protecting each other."

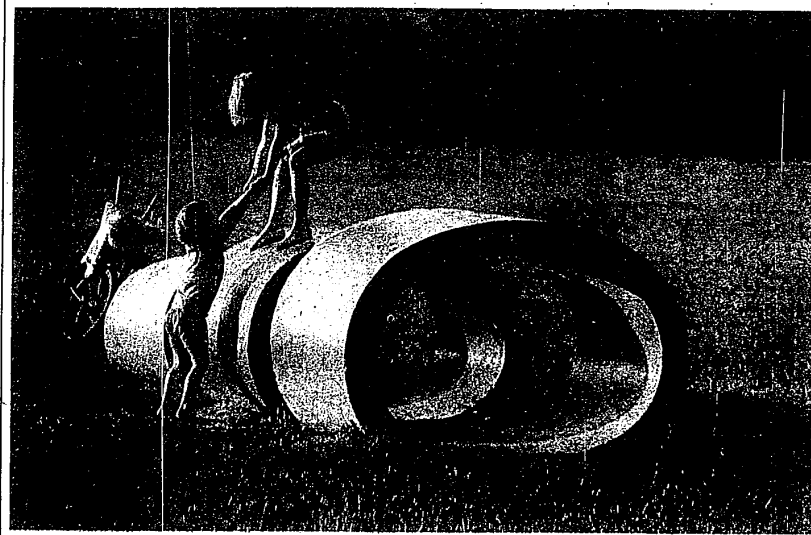
SEVERAL FARMINGTON HILLS patrol cars were called to Lee's home at 2 a.m. Sept. 15 after Cote and John Williams had returned a second time with about a dozen friends armed with clubs and bats.

Because the youths had disarmed and were leaving when police arrived, the officers did not get out of their squad cars, according to Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols.

Nichols said an abbreviated report was made of the incident.

"Our report was that someone had tried to crash the party and was ejected by the homeowner," he said. "There was no further action. We assumed all was well."

Nichols said neither the youths nor Lee have filed complaints with the Farmington Hills police department.



It's a winner

This photograph by Wendy Leary of Birmingham won first place in the Observer & Eccentric second annual color photo contest. Taken in August in a Birmingham park, the photo shows one young child helping another. Judges considered this an excellent example of the contest theme, "International Year of the Child." For more about this photo and other winners, see the back page of this section.



WENDY LEARY

Hills council to decide

Rezoning debate fate ruled on tonight

By STEVE BARNABY
Farmington editor

Whether Farmington Hills residents will vote on the repeal of a rezoning which would allow construction of low-income housing will be determined at tonight's city council session.

City Clerk Floyd Cairns will submit the nearly 6,000 signatures collected by Citizens for More Responsible Government (CMRG).

The group, headed by Julianne Hovanessian, launched a massive petition drive after the council rezoned the land Aug. 13. The group had 45 days to submit the necessary names of registered voters.

While 3,000 names were required, the group nearly doubled the figure.

But the group's effort may have been in vain if city legal minds have their way. The city lawyers have determined that an election to repeal zoning isn't legal.

But CMRG lawyers disagree and say they will press on and go to court if necessary to see an election is conducted on the issue.

In reality, the RC-2 zone allows for any type of multiple dwelling. But the council has approved a plan to build a senior citizen/low-income housing unit on the 11 acres at the corner of Freedom and Drake roads in the city's southwest end.

The petition drive has become intertwined with the city's upcoming city council election. The top three vote-getters in the recent primary are opposed to the project. They are Jack Burwell, William Lange and Donn Wolf.

Two of the staunchest supporters of the

project, Jan Dolan and Joanne Smith, are up for re-election.

Although the council hasn't taken an official position on the petitions, sentiment has been expressed that the advice of city legal counsel should be heeded.

Farmington Hills Agenda posted

FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL

31555 Eleven Mile
7:30 p.m., Oct. 8

Unfinished Business

- Consideration of enactment of amendatory ordinance to the employee retirement system service credit.

- Show case hearing on demolition of building at 21411 Jefferson. Adjourned from meeting of Sept. 24, 1979.

- Consideration of resolution appointing board of directors and term of office for economic development corporation.

New Business

- Consideration of establishing SAD for road improvement in Briar Hill Subdivision.

- Consideration of establishing SAD for sewer Farmington Hills subdivision 1, Raphael, Donahy and Shady Ridge streets.

- Report by city clerk on referendum petition regarding ordinance on RC-2.

- Consideration of approval of first amendment to declaration of restrictions for Meadowlark Subdivision planned unit agreement.

- Consideration for approving contract for landscaping and sprinkler system.

tem for fire station 4 on Drake Road to the Green Ridge Nursery, Inc.

- Appointments to boards and commissions.

- Report on sewer extensions at Biddlestone Pump Station.

- Presentation by Metrovision Inc., in reference to a proposal for TV cable service for Farmington Hills.

- Consideration of resolution supporting house bill 4735 granting local control of state-issued entertainment permits at bars and taverns.

City Managers Report

- Reports on Shiawassee Recreation Center.

- Recommend approval of traffic

control orders for yield signs at Lake Park Drive and Valley Forge Drive.

- Recommendations waiver of sidewalk installation on Ten Mile between Hagerty and I-275.

- Recommendations awarding bid for annual snow and ice control supplies: sand and chloride mixture; salt.

- Recommendations awarding of bid for heavy duty articulating road grader.

- Recommendations awarding of bid for improvement at fire station 1, 2, and 3.

- Reports back to City Council regarding sidewalk installation on Inlander and Northwestern for Glasser Building.

- Recommendations appointment of city zoning inspector.



Joyce Garrett, director of public information for the city of Detroit, will be the guest speaker at this year's Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner. She will speak on the partnership between the city and the suburbs. Also the Citizen of the Year will be named that evening. Cocktails will be at 6:30 p.m., dinner will be at 7:30. The event will be at the Botsford Inn. Those wishing to purchase tickets should contact the Farmington Chamber of Commerce at 474-3440.

Named director

Sheldon Silver of Farmington has been named director of a new program for legal assistants and court administrators at Mercy College of Detroit. The program is designed to prepare those interested in legal work to assist attorneys and judges. A graduate of Mercy College, Silver earned his law degree at Washington University in St. Louis.



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SPEAKING OUT

Farmington Editor Steve Barnaby takes a look at the recent incident involving off-duty Farmington police officials and three teens. He makes some observations in the Crackerbarrel Debate on Page 4C.