Monday's Commentary

Festival backers should reconsider events

What a shame it would be to see the Farmington Founders' Festival become just a memory. But that is a very real possibility if something isn't done to revive the annual summer festival. The reports are glum. The festival committee is in debt from as far back as two years ago. And while businesses and private organizations are willing to take from the festival, few are willing to contribute to keen it healthy.

contribute to keep it healthy.

In short, everyone likes to play, few like to pay.

This year's committee has a monumental job ahead of it. Not only must it plan this year's activi-

val's viability.

Farmington and Farmington Hills businesses and residents must make a decision on the festival. Just

residents must make a decision on the lestival. Just like everything else, the festival is suffering the pains of inflation.

It needs increased economic support to keep attracting the tens of thousands of metropolitan Detroit residents who come to Farmington area each

July.

The festival has been good to Farmington merchants, yet every year the festival committee goes begging for support garnering very little results.

But there are alternatives to just going out of business if the committee is unable to keep the ac-tivities at the same level.

AS ONE FARMINGTON resident recently put it: "The festival is too big. It has lost its hometown flavor. Maybe they should scale it down to what it

used to be."

Not a bad idea, considering that increased economic support forthcoming from the business community and private organizations is highly unlikely. Years ago, when the festival began, the Farming.

ton area was far less developed. Downtown Farmington, Grand River and Farmington roads, was the hub of both the city and township.

But growth has changed all that. Now we have a population spread across the entire 36 square miles. Small shopping plazas are popping up all over the place, competing with the downtown area. It would be a safe bet that residents in the north end of Farmington Hills associate shopping with malls in West Bloomfield, rather than Farmington. This very well could be the time to scale down the Farmington Founders' Festival; instead of trying to

Farmington Founders' Festival; instead of trying to spread it across the entire area

For upgrading fire department

Community owes chief a big thanks

Farmington Hills residents owe John Van de

Farmington mus research.

In truth the debt is too large to repay, But the quiet-spoken fire chief isn't the kind of guy looking for accolades. He knows he has done a fine job and that's good enough for him.

For years to come, Van de Voort will be remembered for building the Farmington Hills Fire Department into a proud and professional organization.

But the Hills department wasn't always looked upon as being professional.

Four years ago when the firefighting veteran came to the Hills, the department was immersed in controversy with then Public Safety Director Ron Holko.

Firefighters, themselves, were divided. Each sta-tion was its own department, setting its own stand-ards, which varied considerably. The intentions of those volunteer firefighters were good, but the results were less than desirable.

They had the spirit, but lacked the true expertise a professional unit. Many disgruntled residents, sensing the discord and feeling insecure about the service, were calling Crackerbarrel DEBATE

To many that sounded good, but reality dictated that a full-time department would just cost too

ALONG CAME John Van de Voort into the eve of

the storm.

Some folks said he was too easygoing to handle the ill will and jealousies which had cropped up between the stations, the city council and the commu-

ty. Van de Voort just smiled. Other folks said he never could wrest the needed

money from a stingy council which didn't have much regard for the volunteers, anyway.

Van de Voort just kept on asking for the needed

funds.

Many laughed when he said that he could make a professional organization out of the volunteer force.

Van de Voort didn't have time for the cynics. He

was just too busy getting the job done.
Today, that job is well on its way and the former
Detroit fire official has decided to call it a day in
Farmington Hills.

Having molded the department into a part volun-teer, part full-time department, the 62-year-old chief can be proud of his accomplishments. He proved the cynics wrong. He did the job that many folks said couldn't be done and saved a bushel of money in the course.

Unfortunately, there are some cynics who still refuse to give Van de Voort his just due. Because he refused to fall into the mold of a power hungry bureaucrat, they can't understand his motives.

Van de Voort knew his motives. He set out to build a lire department which the community could

trust and respect.

Thank you, John Van de Voort. It has been the



r years of whipping the Farm tho recently announced his retirement. (Staff photo)

from our readers

Resident praises police

Full-time firemen defend department

Editor:
As the only eight firefighters employed on a full-time basis by the city of Farmington Hills, we found the letter you received (March 17) from the Farmington Hills firefighter a gross misrepresentation of facts.

for a full-time fire department.

This individual has chosen to vent his rage and anger (brought on by his increased tax assessment) toward the fire department.

It is apparent to us that this /parttime employee lacks the insight/to see exactly what the fire department is at-

Fire official disputes disgruntled employee

Editor:

I would like to clear away the smokescreen laid down in your Monday edition (March 17) by a smoking mad, misinformed and apparently disgruntled department employee.

"Name Withheld" did make one correct statement which this fire department adheres to: "hold costs down."

The cost per capita for fire protection in our community is \$15 - a very reasonable figure in comparison to the control of the con

concept reduces manpower costs astro-omically, yet provides our citizens with an organized and trained fire sup-pression task force.

The fire alarm sounded more than 2,000 times in the past year. Unlike other communities, our men didn't sit other communities, our men didn't sit and wait for an alarm to come in. They were out enforcing fire prevention codes, conducting informational class-es and tours and responding to medical mergencies.

es and other such establishment of the mergencies.

They also maintain equipment incidental to this modern department that has evolved during the past four years. Our full-time firelighters weren't awarded a "fat contract" in negotiations as stated. The salaries were computed based on the mean average salary of other firelighters in the metro area, not at all an excessive award for the tob they notified.

area, not at an an excessive award for the job they perform.
Yes, our community has a new fire department headquarters on Drake Road. This facility was sorely needed to house fire equipment and provide of-fices to effectively administer the de-partment.

partment.

The bullding was designed to fulfill the needs of the community to ultimate growth. The second floor is prepared for expansion. The first level is completed and meets the code requireor expansion. The first level is com-pleted and meets the code require-ments. This is evidenced by a certifi-cate of occupancy by the building offi-cial.

The station was completed as planned and not one cent over the bond issue was used.

The anonymous writer further states only two trucks provide protection to the industrial park, while, in fact, three trucks are stationed there and have been for a considerable length of time.

Tax dollars have been judiciously spent to provide dependable, safe, technologically advanced firefighting rolling stock.

sologically advanced firefighting rollings took
Those fire trucks have been purposed to the same manufacturer because they have been the low bidder. The property was deed to the too bidder. The property was deed past contracts the property was deed to the property of th

his duties.

I regret that one anonymous person, armed with untruths, would attempt to destroy the most cost-efficient fire service system in the state. Other Farmington Hills firefighters are dedicated and proud to serve protecting our citi-

and proud to serve protecting our citi-izency.

The fire department has a procedure available where employees may re-solve any differences. I personally in-tite the anonymous writer to present his grievance at our regularly sched-uled board meeting.

We don't have the power to control spiraling inflation or tax assessments, but ee are contributing to the solution in every way possible. At the same time, our endeavor is to provide all the people of this city effective protection from the destructive forces of fire.

THOMAS JOHNSON, Deputy fire chief Farmington Hills

Having recently negotiated that "fat" contract, we assure you that these two administrators are efficient and effective in management of the city's revenues.

As for the attacks made on full-time salaries, the author of that letter isn't relying on facts.

The job requirements and responsibilities of a Farmington Hills firefighter don't compare with the requirements and responsibilities of a fire-

Although praises for our Farmington

Although praises for our Farmington Hills Police Department aren't prevalent, I believe in giving a pat on the back when it is deserved.

I recently was stranded on 12 Mile with my 12-year-old daughter after dark. I happened to be on a stretch of the road where houses are few and far

the road where houses and the between.

After turning on the hazards in the car, my daughter and I started to walk towards some bright lights. Cars zoomed by quickly.

fighter working for a completely full-time department.

Therefore, it is unfair and unrealistic to compare wages and contracts. In ad-dition, we fail to see how a mere eight full-time firefighters constitutes a waste of tax dollars. Surely a city with the population and size of Farmington Hills isn't overstaffed nor overbur-dened.

In closing, we don't wish the public In closing, we don't wish the public to get the impression that its full-time fireflighters are interested in raping the city's tax dollars. However, we hope that the anonymous fire-flighter realizes that we also received that increased tax assessment and also must deal with rising inflation.

RICHARD MARINUCCI
Farmington Hills Fire Fighters Associated the control of the control

When an officer quietly pulled along-side us and asked if he could be of ser-vice, I could have shouted for joy. He kindly drove us to a service station where I made arrangements for my car to be towed, and then he drove us

Giving an assist to a stranded motor Giving an assist to a stranded motor-ist may not seem like much, but I can vouch that it meant a great deal to me. This is the second time I have had to use the Farmington Hills Police De-partment and in both cases the officers

partment and in both cases the officers were considerate, conscientious, kind and efficient.

Again, many thanks for a job well done it is good to know that some of our tax dollars are indeed put to worthwhile use.

RUTH KLEHM, Farmington Hills

St. Patrick's Day isn't fun for all

Editor:
I don't know what, if anything, can be accomplished by voicing our views on this subject, but perhaps some brief article may show there is another side to the coin in the glorification of St. Patields. P. trick's Day every year by the newspa-pers and television news media.

pers and television news means. Living right near Dunleavy's Pub is despair for homeowners. We can depend on the usual melee, where probably otherwise intelligent human beings suddenly turn into an insane bunch of wild animals on stampede, destroying our personal property and completely disrespecting the law.

when teenagers drive across our lawn and tear up our sod it is termed nallcious destruction of property and vandalism. When the so-called "adults" come out for their St. Partick's Day celebration and destroy and mutilate and drive away from the scene, there is no label, just double standards.

We homeowners were elated when "no parking" signs were put up, kidding ourselves that we have some protein. These signs are a big joke, these characters completely ignore them, parking next to and driving over the signs.

Something really stinks at city hall. What an effort and hassle to get the police out to ticket offenders. When we police out to ticket offenders. When we summoned the police out to get some help, the dispatcher at the police sta-tion reforted, "Well, it's only one day a year, you know." And then she hung up. Another neighbor then called the po-lice and inquired of the dispatcher if it

parking" signs were posted and not get-a ticket. She replied that she was re-lieved he wasn't another complainer and told him to go ahead and park -there, he wouldn't get a ticket.

there, he wouldn't get a ticket.

It wann't until one neighbor with a little weight and authority complained that any action was taken. When that any existence were a supplied to the chief of police financies was appalled at the damage that had transperd at the damage that had trans outside to relieve themselves between our evergreen remember what they did the next day?

Naturally, many of us were upset over this annual circus. We work hard on our and adjoining city property, even receiving awards from the Farm-ington Beautification Commission just to keep Farmington beautiful.

The day after St. Patrick's Day, I went down to see the city manager and suggested that he allow us to hire one police officer and pay him out of our own pockers to enforce the law next year on St. Patrick's Day.

We can't seem to come up with any other solutions outside of spending the entire night out there yelling and screaming to no avail. Just what protection do we get for our thousands of tax dollars these days?

Some day we too would like to enjoy St. Patrick's Day. But each year it just become a bigger headache.

Suburban Communications Corporation

is Monday

Plate tab

deadline

Deadline for obtaining 1980 Michigan license plate tabs is Monday.
Secretary of State branch offices will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday to handle the last-minute rush.
All owners must purchase plate tabs by March 31 to legally operate their yehicles on public highways.

Farmington Observer

23352 Farmington Road

John Reddy, General Mgr.
Thomas A. Riordan, Executive Editor
George J. Hagan, Advertising Director, Fred J. Wright, Circulation Director

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