

# Farmington Observer

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## Morale lags as squabbles plague firefighters

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

"The citizens are the ones who are suffering."

That's the conclusion of one Farmington Hills firefighter who says the "place is falling apart" because of internal department squabbles.

The firefighter's reaction comes on the heels of the resignation of Acting Fire Chief Tom Johnson, who held that position for one year.

Johnson claimed his authority has been undermined and was unable to effectively administer the department.

According to some sources within the department, some volunteer firefighters have gone directly to city councilmembers to complain about Johnson's disciplinary actions against some volunteers.

The Hills department is composed of eight full-time firefighters, with the remainder of the contingent made up of

paid callback volunteers.

Although most everyone in the department says a majority of volunteers and full-time firefighters maintain an amicable relationship, some personnel say a handful of volunteers, in concert with some councilmembers, are paving the way to go away with the full-time staff.

BUT COUNCILMAN Earl Oppenheimer denies those allegations. He

has been fingered by many firefighters as one of those legislative leaders who "meddles."

"The only thing I've done is expressed my views at an open meeting," said Oppenheimer.

Last September he publicly criticized Johnson for disciplinary action taken against volunteers who came before council to object to some portions of the fire department budget.

"What bothers me was when Johnson

encouraged full-timers to speak out on the EMS and took no action and then turned around and disciplined the volunteers," he said.

A number of firefighters, full-time and volunteers, alike, had campaigned to put a question on the ballot seeking to gain support for a city-run emergency medical service.

One of the full-time firefighters spoke before city council on the issue.

The veteran councilman says John-

son is seeking a scapegoat by claiming his authority has been undermined.

Although Oppenheimer admits he would like to keep the full-time contingent as small as possible, he denies wanting to do away with them completely.

"I don't think that will happen in the foreseeable future, unless we get enough people to answer calls when they occur," he said.

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## Physicians fail to raise funds in hospital deal

By LYNN ORR

Redford Community Hospital officials expect to make a decision next month on a possible alignment with Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills.

Botsford has offered \$3 million to purchase the Redford Medical Center, which supplies about 90 percent of the hospital's patients. The offer to Dr. Raymond Stoller, senior partner of the privately owned medical center, is contingent on combining the two hospitals.

The Board of Trustees of Redford Hospital last week tabled a motion to combine with Botsford in order to allow time to answer the questions of everyone involved, particularly the Redford staff members, according to James Kelly, Redford Township supervisor and a hospital board member.

"Even Dr. Stoller supported the idea of a joint meeting to air some of the concerns the doctors have," Kelly said.

The doctors fear they may be pushed out by Botsford personnel, Kelly said, although he believes Botsford officials have addressed that problem.

"That is a concern I had answered, to my satisfaction when we met with some of the Botsford directors," he said.

He hopes Redford doctors meet with Botsford doctors to alleviate any concerns of both groups before next month's meeting of the board of directors.

"I think they need this reassurance," Kelly added. He also hopes a meeting will be arranged between both boards of directors with all members present.

Major considerations of the Redford board in discussing the offer have included: adequate community support, principally in Redford; job protection, including wages and benefits, for staff and employees of the hospital; and the future security of the hospital in the area.

Botsford officials earlier assured the board that any reduction in staff would take place by attrition. Botsford plans to continue services at Redford hospital and also use the site for training of residents in family practice.

The hospitals serve the same areas, located about 2 1/2 miles apart on Grand River. Redford Community admitted its first patients in 1956 and has undergone extensive remodeling, including the addition of an intensive care coronary unit and laboratories, in the last three years. It currently has 72 beds and 180 staff members and employees.

Botsford opened in 1965 and has 300 beds, 1,400 employees and 250 on the medical staff.



### It's circus time

Farmington Mayor William Hartscock gets together with Woo Pee the Clown in preparation for the Shrine, March 29, Mayor's Day at the Shrine Circus. Standing in the rear are Louis Lenart (left) and Jim Kafkas both of the Shrine Circus staff. The Shrine Circus runs from Friday, March 20 to Sunday, April 5. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Eastern Onion messengers concentrate on laughs

Story: TERRIE SANTAMARIA  
Photos: DAVID FRANK

"Yes, it's Milligan, Wittigan, Shilligan and Smilligan who this is for. But if you're not from Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is a bore!"

— Excerpt from an Eastern Onion song

Boring is what Eastern Onion isn't. Phone calls to the firm's busy Southfield office are answered by a genial voice and are often put on hold — usually a dull prospect. Not so at Eastern Onion.

"This probably is one of the only companies around where people call in

and ask to be put on hold," said Eastern Onion owner Sandy Parrish, explaining that holding callers are entertained by celebrity impersonations.

One voice, closely resembling comedian Steve Martin, tells callers to "do something wild and crazy for your friends, send them an Eastern Onion singing telegram. It'll embarrass the hell out of them and make them feel small."

In addition to embarrassment, said the business' owners, recipients of Eastern Onion telegrams feel shocked, surprised and even downright silly.

"I KEPT THINKING it couldn't really be happening to me," said Pat

Smolen of Southfield. The interior designer's 30th birthday celebration last week in Meriwether's Southfield restaurant included a surprise visit from Eastern Onion messengers.

"All of a sudden a girl in a tuxedo and top hat came in blowing a siren, singing and dancing," Ms. Smolen said.

However, the real surprise came when Eastern Onion's Macho Man appeared wearing skin-tight pants and a black leather jacket with "Macho Man" spelled out across the back in rhinestones.

"He came up and handcuffed me to a chair," she said. "The he proceeded to do a very provocative dance and started strip."

Ms. Smolen recalls wondering how far he would go in a family restaurant. "He got down to exposing his sequined skivvies," she said. "It was racy and bawdy but tastefully done." Even though Ms. Smolen was very embarrassed, it "was a terrific birthday. I wanted something bizarre and I got it."

OFFERING the bizarre is among the keys to Eastern Onion's success. According to Parrish's wife, Carol, who is also co-owner of the business, "If you make the telegram a little bit naughty, people like it better. Anybody can send a sweet telegram."

Many prominent Detroiters have received Eastern Onion telegrams, said

the Southfield couple.

Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca was sent a telegram for his 25th wedding anniversary. Detroit Lion Billy Sims and coach Monte Clark received an Eastern Onion Belly-Gram in the Silverdome lockerroom after last season's fifth win. John Kelly and Marilyn Turner sent each other birthday messages on their live "Kelly and Company" television show.

Eastern Onion delivers singing telegrams anywhere in lower Michigan, Parrish said. There are nine characters, ranging from tuxedo-and-top-hat garbed messengers to the top-of-the-line Macho Man and Belly-Gram. Telegrams are priced from \$35 to \$75 plus mileage.

giggly character, according to, Gay Lynn Clayton.

Mrs. Clayton, 25, is one of Eastern Onion's 20 or so messengers. The East Detroiter introduced the Dolly Part Onion character and also appears as Wonder Onion Woman, the singing, dancing birthday cake, Mac-East and Scarlett O'Piglet.

"It's the greatest job I've ever had," said Mrs. Clayton, an Eastern Onion messenger since the Detroit franchise opened in October.

"It enables me to release all of my inner energies and to bring some fun and happiness to other people's lives as well as my own." She added, "The pay is excellent, too. Who could ask for more?"

DOLLY PART ONION, a new Eastern Onion character, debuted in Detroit last week. She is a bosomy, blonde-wigged, shimmering-dressed, former Miss Roseville, Mrs. Clayton says one of her most memorable Eastern Onion performances was a

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"Kelly and Co. staffers Randy Barone of Birmingham and Nancy Lenzen of Farmington Hills join in a "thank you" telegram delivered by Amy Reitz wearing fatis and a wedding veil. The message was sent by Sue Gordon Bridal Salon of Birmingham after a special wedding show.

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