

Shoppers await board decision on supermarket

Farmington Planning Commission members are expected to decide tonight whether to recommend or reject a request to rezone most of an 11-acre parcel on the southeast corner of Nine Mile and Farmington Road from office to commercial use for a shopping center.

Merchants in the Downtown Farmington Center are hoping that the request will be denied to prevent them from losing more business through increased competition.

The anchor store in the proposed shopping center would be a 41,000 square foot Farmer Jack food store that would replace the 18,000 square foot store at Farmington Road and Liberty. Other proposed tenants include ACO Hardware and Perry Drugs.

The planning commission meeting begins at 8 p.m. But four of the nine planning commissioners who serve on a special subcommittee that is reviewing the Borman proposal and listening to objections from downtown merchants and residents will meet at 7:30 p.m. to come up with a consensus recommendation.

Shirley Richardson, planning commissioner, said research into the site plan is complete and opinions from residents and merchants have been heard by subcommittee members.

"I can't tell you more because I don't know which way the subcommittee is going on this," Richardson said. "We've kept the merchants in the downtown area in mind and we've tried to keep our residents in mind, too."

FARMER JACK representatives have stated in past discussions with city officials that they plan to close the old store in the downtown area regardless of the rezoning decision.

Because the existing store has limited space for storage, Borman officials said they are interested in building a store that will serve Farmington residents as well as persons living south of the city and to the west.

Leading the opposition to such a move are Laurie Newton, owner of Farmington Delicatessen and Sausage,

33179 Grand River, and Joanne Fellenberg, who lives behind the existing Farmer Jack store.

Ms. Newton is going to be out of town for tonight's meeting but has made her feelings known as president of the Downtown Farmington Center Merchants Association.

The association spokesman stresses that the city has an obligation to help existing businesses which are already experiencing a sales slump.

She notes that there are already two hardware stores and three drug stores located less than a mile from the proposed shopping center.

"WHAT'S TO PREVENT them from opening another Kowalski's sausage shop or another florist or frame shop," asked Newton, gesturing toward two surrounding stores in the downtown center.

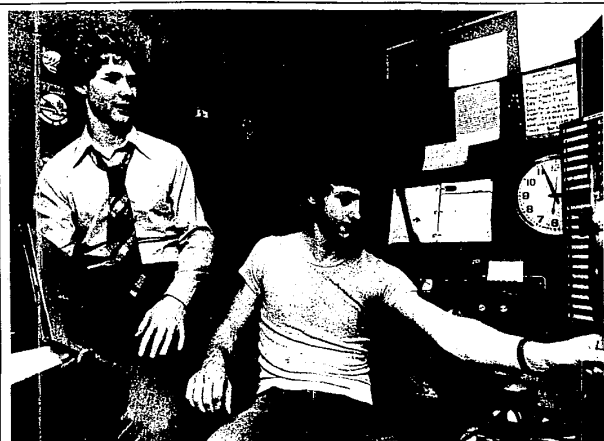
Planning studies commissioned by the developer of the proposed project, Weatherford/Walker Developments, say the 102,000 square foot convenience shopping center will have minimal effect on sales in downtown stores.

"In the long run we believe that the effect may be positive, rather than negative," states the Villacian-Leman planning consultants study.

"The most immediate impact, of course, would be to place 18,000 square feet of floor space (the vacated Farmer Jack supermarket) on the market which could be used for a variety of small or even larger new comparison stores."

The consultants for the developer suggest that downtown merchants should concentrate on fashion stores and gift and craft boutiques instead of trying to compete against malls and general merchandise centers.

Fellenberg, however, isn't convinced that closing the existing Farmer Jack store is a "positive" effect. She's afraid the store will be an abandoned eyesore when it could remain open as a food store. She's collected close to 100 signatures on petitions that seek to keep the downtown store open.



Discussing the day's broadcast and checking over the equipment at WORB radio are (from left) Greg Thompson, the station's general manager and disc jockey Tom Beattie.

Station may be small but spirits remain high

By Craig Piechura staff writer

The radio station is not what you'd call a powerhouse.

Driving a quarter mile away from the studios of WORB-FM (90.3 on the dial), you notice the signal starts to fade, mixing the sounds of two competing rock stations on the car radio. On a good day the range is three miles from the tower at Hatfield and I-696. Monday was not a good day.

Nobody makes a cent working at a 10-watt, student-run Oakland Community College (OCC) station. And students working behind the mike and behind the scenes aren't even graded on their performance. The 50 persons working at WORB are members of a campus radio club, the Broadcasting Guild.

But the students are learning the nuts-and-bolts operation of a radio station, said Greg Thompson, general manager of the station and a broadcasting novice himself. May 11 marks the station's fourth year on the air. In order to comply with FCC regulations, the station is required to request a license renewal before the current license expires Oct. 1.

An important criteria for securing license renewal is a station's commitment to serving the public with news and information.

Thompson admits some members of the college faculty consider the radio station staff "a bunch of punks playing heavy metal rock," but he said the station makes a point of airing local news to serve the college students and surrounding community.

"We do news twice daily, at 1:15 and 6:15 p.m.," said Thompson, 19, of Royal Oak, whose major is business administration.

"There's no wire machine. We take information from the Farmington Observer, the Detroit Free Press, any paper we can get our hands on. But we try to emphasize local news. One-fourth of all our news pertains to the campus or Farmington Hills. The rest is state, national and international."

LOCAL SPORTS reports are aired at 12:15 and 4:15 p.m. Campus sporting events are given top priority along with reports of local high-school scores.

Sports director Paul Barrett has interviewed David Hill of the Detroit Lions for the show and recently interviewed three Brother Rice High School athletes about their decision to play basketball at Notre Dame, Michigan State and the University of Michigan and the controversy over illegal recruiting payments.

Community Calendar events go over the airwaves in the form of public service announcements about the local YMCA, the Farmington Community Center and library programs.

A special report aired some time ago explored the question of dumping toxic waste in a Rochester landfill. Thompson said. The news was of interest to students on the campus and the staff benefited from the experience of producing a news show.

The bulk of the 80 hours of weekly programming — 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday-Friday — is rock music, the staple of most college students. Disc jockeys must adhere to a format, as in commercial radio, but the play list is much broader than the commercial stations'.

OBSCURE GROUPS such as Soft Cell and XTC are played regularly while the most extreme sounds found on records by groups such as the Dead Kennedys are aired on special shows like "Drastic Plastic."

Thompson said college radio stations have succeeded in breaking national records such as "We Got the Beat" by the Go-Gos when commercial radio wouldn't touch them. For that reason record companies are willing to send the small station promotional records.

The volunteer disc jockeys make a point of tape recording their shows to see how well or bad they did.

A public service spot about mail fraud gets garbled by Barrett because he was unfamiliar with it, and he vows to improve his delivery by the next show. He feels he's popping the letter A so he practices tongue twisters.

"If you say 'mashing' instead of 'matching,' you know it, you catch yourself and try not to do it again," said disc jockey Tom Beattie, 20, of Farmington, a math-science major.

Beattie has no desire to get into professional broadcasting, but Thompson and Barrett are trying.

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How local spinner makes the big time

By Judith Berno staff writer

Dave Scott thinks he's one lucky guy. The 23-year-old West Bloomfield native is realizing his dream of working in radio. And he's doing it practically in his hometown.

Scott is the morning-drive disc jockey on WJLZ-FM, tagged "Detroit's New Wave." He recently was named musical director of the station, with studios newly located on 14 Mile Road in Farmington Hills near Loehman's Square on Orchard Lake Road.

"It's a hobby — it's always been a hobby. But I get paid for it," Scott explained during a recent interview.

He checked college when the opportunity to work for a new rock-'n'-roll station opened up 1½ years ago. He is the youngest on-the-air personality.

"In this business to land a job right in Detroit, three miles from where I grew up, it's a dream."

SCOTT ATTRIBUTED at least part of his realization to his start in student radio — at West Bloomfield High School's WBLD-FM.

"Next to this radio station, that was the most professional station I've ever worked at," maintained Scott, who worked part time at several radio stations during two years at Grand Valley State College.

WBLD sponsor Dave Albery, a radio broadcasting teacher, is a perfectionist who knows radio and ran the station accordingly, he said.

Albery withdrew as sponsor 2½ years ago when the school district was unable to increase the station's budget and changed its sponsor requirements, Principal Ted Cavin said.

The new requirements mandated that a sponsor be closed by during all broadcasting to offset school liability in case of an accident. The station was then on the air daily through the evening hours.

A former student was hired as sponsor. Broadcasting hours and programming were cut back. Albery continued

to teach the school's radio broadcasting classes.

SCOTT RECALLED the station's heyday when it featured live sports, local news ("much of which we stole from your newspaper," The Eccentric) and a "Community Spotlight" program based on interviews with community and school-district personalities.

"The radio station is more than just an extracurricular activity," Scott insisted. "It is a mini vocational job training for students. Not only was it a training ground," he added, "but a service to the community."

"It was a little bit of radio and a good bit of business and how to deal with people."

Cavin agreed: "We were really providing a lot of learning for a truly student-run station. Programs like radio stations tend to do a very good job for a particular group of young people. But it's expensive."

The station was created in the early '70s through a grant from a private individual, Cavin said. "It has always had serious limitations on what it took to keep it going."

Scott listed 19 WBLD staff members who have gone on to broadcasting jobs. THEY INCLUDE: Chuck Sieman, program manager WITL-Lansing for seven years; Jane Rozman, disc jockey with WWCK, Lansing; Deanne Lane, weekend anchorman for WJIM-TV, Lansing; Jim Filkins, a disc jockey with WBLD-Traverse City; Dan Lipson, news director WMSN-Lansing; Bryan Alexander, disc jockey, WGGL-Houghton.

"For that short period of time, to have that many people in radio, it's a miracle."

"Maybe it's just aptly, maybe nobody cares, but I really think that station did a lot of good." He would like to see it opened up to community use and the possibility of further funding through the auspices of West Bloomfield Community Education or a vocational education grant.

Cavin said those avenues generally have been explored.

Sheriff supports MADD

By M.B. Dillon Ward staff writer

Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen has joined Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD, in its efforts to lower the number of persons killed annually in alcohol-related auto accidents.

In 1981, the figure topped 25,000 nationally.

At a meeting of MADD's newly-formed Oakland County chapter April 6, Spreen offered to contribute \$1,000 from a county volunteer force fund towards the purchase of videotape equipment.

Spreen suggests the money be used to equip a van with a video camera and lights, enabling the Oakland County Alcohol Enforcement Team to film drunk drivers at accident scenes.

Officers assigned to the state-and-federally-funded enforcement team are strategically positioned throughout the city during hours drunk drivers are likeliest to be on the road. Their squad cars are equipped with mobile breathalizers, a system duplicated nowhere else in Michigan.

Drunk driving arrests in Oakland County are up 110 percent since the enforcement program began in April, 1980.

"I went to the meeting last Monday in that snowstorm because I've seen an awful lot of deaths on the highway since I got into law enforcement in 1941," said Spreen.

"My wife's grandfather was hit by a hit-and-run drunk, and friends of mine have been hurt and killed by drunk drivers."

"The statistics are frightening and chilling. More people are killed in auto accidents than by all forms of violent crime combined each year," Spreen said.

OAKLAND COUNTY deputy sheriffs Doug Wurtz and Ken Waters also attended the MADD meeting.

"We went because of personal interest, we were not sent," said Wurtz. "The department as a whole and myself feel that at least an indication of our interest is essential to the function of MADD. We're headed towards a common goal."

The sheriff's department would like very much to work with MADD, and hopefully more and more citizens will become concerned about crime, Spreen said.

Americans worry about the ghastly horrors of wars, but we've killed more people by the car in the last 50 or 60 years than in all the wars since we became a nation. Something should be done," he added.

Spreen is utilizing the time before MADD's next meeting (7:30 p.m. on April 26 at Southfield's Naval Reserve at Eleven Mile and Inkster roads) to research the legalities and logistics of videotaping.

"Videotape of drunks at the accident scene could potentially save a lot of money in court costs and save taxpayers a hell of a lot of money," Spreen said.

"With videotape, the drunk would be seen at the time he kills or injures someone, and not later in the courtroom when he's all contrite and looking like he just stepped out of a barber-shop and (is)the epitome of good citizenship."

SPREEN EQUATES the annual death toll due to drunk driving with "knocking Farmington Hills off the map. If the 57,000 people living in Farmington Hills were wiped off the map, it would be the most horrendous catastrophe of all time."

"Yet we do the same thing over 365 days of the year with auto accidents. There are 53,000 people that will not be around next year because of death caused in an accident. And over half those accidents will be caused by drunk drivers."

"Sooner or later, the law of averages catches up with us," Spreen added.

THE BATTLE being waged against the drunk driver could be a losing one for law enforcement in light of the country's poor economic condition — a fact that scares Spreen.

"Sure I'm scared. The whole country is scared. We were just given word that our funding is safeguarded for another year, and I'd say it's probably because we're doing a hell of a job."

"But we have to live from day to day and year to year. There are no guarantees we'll receive the same amount of funds next year. But we still need a measure of protection out there."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Testing, testing

Public Safety Lt. Frank Lauhoff has his machine and is ready to make the big test on two very wary volunteers. To see who he was testing and for what, turn to Page 3A.

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