

# Farmington Observer

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## Baptist Manor construction is launched

By Craig Plechura  
staff writer

The absence of minorities in two Farmington Hills senior citizen complexes may cause funding problems for directors of the nonprofit Metropolitan Detroit Baptist Manor corporation, despite efforts to recruit minority tenants.

A little more than a month after breaking ground on a new site, work is well under way at Drake Apartments, a 102-unit facility for low- and moderate-income persons age 62 and over.

Final approval of direct loan funding for the \$2.5-million project came Sept. 15 from the regional office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Since that day construction crews from Liberty Construction Co. have installed the foundation, floors and outer walls on the five-acre site on Drake Road, north of Freedom.

To qualify for federal financing — known in bureaucratic language as the HUD-202 Section 8 program — project managers are required to set aside a percentage of apartments for minority tenants.

To try to attract minorities to settle in the new complex — as well as Baptist Manor's original 393-unit complex on 13 Mile Road, east of Orchard Lake Road — ads have been placed in the black community newspaper, the Michigan Chronicle. Letters were sent to black ministers of inner city churches, directors of the Detroit office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and various Latino organizations, according to Roderick J. Smith, executive director of the nonprofit organization representing a dozen American Baptist Churches in the area.

HOWEVER, at present there are no minorities living in the Detroit Baptist Manor and no minorities have submitted applications for residency in the new Drake Apartments, according to Smith.

"It's amazing to us that we don't have any," Smith said.

"We don't ask race on our applications. But what often happens is when (minorities) find out where we are located they're not interested in coming out this far away."

Low-income housing for families, Smith said, might be more attractive to minority groups, but senior citizens are

less willing to move far from their old neighborhoods.

The Farmington area project only needs to meet the needs of minorities already living in the area, according to Wendell Holmes, equal opportunity specialist in the fair housing division of the Detroit HUD office.

When most persons hear the word "minority," Holmes said, they think of blacks. However, federal criteria goes beyond just blacks to include American Indians and Eskimos, Asians and "others."

Recent census figures for Farmington Hills, for example, show the city has a minority population of 4 percent, said Holmes, with 310 blacks, 85 American Indians or Eskimos, 992 Asians, and 212 "others."

THEREFORE, said Holmes, the 102-unit apartment complex on Drake Road should be expected to house four minority tenants which could mean three Asians and one black.

"We look at the (local) population, the economic level of an area and come up with a percentage, basically, of minorities who should be able to move in that area," Holmes said. "If there is no discrimination in the application process, we'd assume the minorities would comprise the same percentage (in the apartment complex) as the general population of the city."

If numbers for minorities in the federally-financed apartment complex fall far below what is expected, Holmes said, HUD officials may meet with Baptist Manor representatives "to help them with their outreach efforts."

Tests could be conducted to see if minorities are given an equal opportunity to rent a unit in either complex with the courtesy extended to white applicants.

Directors of the housing project say they welcome any help in attracting minorities to the project and stress that they've done everything required to comply with federal law.

"The fact that they (minorities) are not there has nothing to do with our policy or our system of taking applications because we're wide open," says William T. Burgess, chairman of the board of Metropolitan Detroit Baptist Manor, Inc.

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Fran Hoetger works on her Braille transcribing at home where she can concentrate and where she has all the necessary tools at hand.

## Patience counts when Braillists map out a project

By Craig Plechura  
staff writer

After six years of transcribing printed text into Braille, Fran Hoetger has gotten pretty good at punching out dots read by the blind.

President of the 88-member Nardin Park Braille Transcribers volunteer group, Hoetger said transcribers have made Braille texts from school textbooks, foreign language books, mathematics lessons, greeting cards, recipes, diplomas, menus and dietary instructions.

Virtually anything that appears in printed form — including graphics — can be transformed into Braille if you've got time to wait. Students who need a Braille textbook for fall classes usually submit the text to the transcribers by spring to make sure it'll be ready.

A 100-page print textbook, Hoetger said, translates into 900 pages of Braille bound in nine volumes, with each page 11-by-11 1/2 inches. The job takes a trained transcriber 502 hours, she said.

"Last week I finished a bond portfolio for E.P. Hutton who wanted it for one of their blind clients," Hoetger, of Farmington, said.

She jokes that she's often asked if she ever transcribed Playboy magazine into Braille. She hasn't but some of the novels she's transcribed were "pretty racy."

"YOU CAN'T edit the writer's book at all," Hoetger said. "That's censorship. If there's a printing error, we put it in. If there's swearing, we swear. If you blush easily, you blush."

It didn't faze her, she said, when she had to make raised line drawings of the male-reproductive system for a young man's biology class.

"I'm sure they're just as curious about the process as anybody else," she said matter-of-factly.

First priority in transcribing requests, she said, is textbooks needed for classes by blind students. Some books are widely used throughout the country and may already have been transcribed by someone else.

Before a transcriber begins a Braille transcription of a book, they are supposed to contact the American Printing House for the Blind which keeps a current list of catalogued books in Braille. When the book is completed various groups around the country will make copies for persons in other cities who would like one.

The Farmington Hills Braille group gets a lot of requests for copies of a pamphlet called "Warning: Hotels Can Be Hazardous To Your Health," Hoetger said. Blind readers as far away as India and Hawaii have been sent copies of that text.

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## Other experts disagree

## Farm chief says PBB effects minimal

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

Michigan residents who fear that the food they purchase is contaminated with dangerous levels of PBB are overreacting, according to Dean Priggeon, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Kenneth Van Patten, the department's product assurance bureau chief.

The officials visited the Farmington Hills Holiday Inn last week to address about 70 Detroit-area meat and dairy inspectors, plant industry and animal

health personnel and soil conservationists.

The luncheon was the last stop in a statewide tour by department officials intended to improve communication with employees.

Van Patten said a recent study shows it would take 546 years for "a minimum problem (which would affect liver weight)" to become noticeable in a 150-pound individual who for one year consumed Michigan-produced meat and milk.

However, the state's Toxic Substance Control Commission — which conduct-

ed the study — is less content.

FORMED AS a watchdog group for the agriculture department, it has urged the governor to re-enact Act 77 — the recently-expired law which tightened the federal standard for PBB levels in food from 300 to 20 parts per billion — according to Toxic Substance Control Commission Executive Secretary Larry Holcomb.

At least 97 percent of Michigan's population has levels of PBB, the fire retardant chemical that inadvertently was mixed with dairy feed in 1974. Mistaken for a food additive, PBB poisoned thousands of cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens as well as soil.

"People don't realize how small a part per billion is, or how many thousands of tests we've done," Van Patten said.

"One part per billion is equal to only one inch every 16,000 miles. The tolerance for milk is 150 parts per billion. We've got it down to two parts per billion."

"If there is concern, it should be among farm families. They'd be the ones to be concerned. Most people in Michigan have low levels (of PBB). I'm sure I do."

THE PRODUCT assurance chief admitted "not enough is known" to determine whether current standards are adequate.

The department and commission agree the former state standard of 20 parts per billion is too restrictive — "in fact our staff has recommended that Act 77 be amended to the federal standard (of 300 parts per billion)," Holcomb said.

But unlike the department, the commission is concerned that because of the law's expiration, illegal amounts of PBB could be reintroduced into the food chain.

"The state has lost powers it had under Act 77 to indemnify farmers. It can quarantine a cow if its PBB level exceeds federal standards, but it can't pay the farmer for the cow and destroy it," Holcomb said.

The commission monitors farms whose soil contains PBB, he added. "Sure we continue to keep track of those farms, but if livestock were reintroduced to any one of those farms, excessive quantities of PBB could re-enter the food supply."

VAN PATTEN disagrees.

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## Bar owner found guilty in brawl



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Mike Watzman tells his side of the story behind a confrontation with the police as he sits in a booth at his restaurant/lounge.

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

In the latest round in an ongoing battle between a Farmington Hills restaurant/bar owner and the Farmington Hills police, Michael Watzman was found guilty of disturbing the peace and interference with a police officer Tuesday in 47th District Court.

Watzman owns Be My Guest restaurant on 9 Mile near Middlebelt. Sentencing was suspended by Judge Michael Hand pending a presentence investigation by the court's probation department.

The case, and events preceding it, have so angered Watzman that he says he is filing a \$2-million harassment suit against the Farmington Hills Police Department in U.S. District Court.

Watzman's attorney, Charles Evans of Berkley, would not comment on the details of the case, but said, "It's unbelievable."

"It sounds like fantasy, but whatever Watzman says is true. It's all true. I have personal knowledge of many of the incidents, all of which have been documented and reported to the mayor (Jack Burwell) and (Rep. Sandy) Brotherton."

Farmington Hills Police Officer Nancy Schneider, who arrested Watzman in the incident last summer that led to last week's trial — refused

to discuss the case.

She needed the permission of Police Chief John Nichols before commenting, she said.

According to Watzman, 60, he was outside his apartment building talking to his friend, 29-year-old Kathy Rowe of Hartland, in his parked car, when Schneider and another police officer simultaneously pulled into his driveway from opposite directions.

"I was out with my attorney, Charles Evans, in Greetown that night," said Watzman. "I dropped him off in Berkley and then stopped at my bar because my daughter had closed for me that night."

"So I arrived at my apartment complex about 4:15 a.m."

Watzman said Schneider said she and a fellow officer were responding to, "An anonymous call from someone who complained I was disturbing the peace."

"The other officer stuck a flashlight in my friend's face and asked her why she was crying," Watzman said he realized "something was fishy" and went in to call his attorney.

He (Evans) told me that unless they (the police) had a warrant, they had no right to be on my property," he said.

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