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Docket too crowded, 47th district judge says

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

District Judge Margaret Schaeffer has requested that a magistrate be added to the court staff to relieve the burden of a growing case docket.

When established, the 47th District Court had only one judge. Later in the court's history a magistrate was added to relieve the burgeoning case load. But that position later was elevated to a second district judge seat.

A part-time position, the magistrate would earn \$2,000, if both Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils — now studying their jointly funded agencies' preliminary budgets — approve Schaeffer's request for help.

"We need a magistrate to help us out when we get jam-ups," Schaeffer said, referring to scheduling problems in her and Judge Michael Hand's court.

The 47th District Court, which serves both municipalities, handled approximately 23,506 cases in 1982 compared to about 27,000 cases in 1981.

But time constraints required by law between the time of an arrest, arraignment and preliminary exam, for example, makes it "often not possible for judges to handle all the cases that must be set for a particular day," Schaeffer said.

IN REQUESTING a magistrate who would be called on "as-needed basis," Schaeffer indicated that certain types of legal hearings, such as for traffic arrests, take longer than in past years when a city attorney handled traffic cases. Traffic statute violators now are entitled to an additional appeal following the initial informal hearing which makes a traffic case drag on longer than in past years.

So if approved, a magistrate would handle the arraignments, preliminary exam and informal traffic hearings when both judges are over-scheduled, Schaeffer said.

The new 1983 drunk driving law also will place added burden on the court's docket, Schaeffer said, requiring the hiring of two clerks and an additional probation officer.

"We are just going to be bogged down," Schaeffer said. "Every time we get a restricted license (because of a drunk or impaired driving conviction), we have to fill out all sorts of forms now."

The new law will require additional paper work, mandatory screening of each person convicted of drunk or impaired driving, as well as an expected increased demand for jury trials and court-appointed attorneys.

And even with a proposed computer system, which the judges are still considering, additional staff is required to keep pace with employees' existing work on civil cases, small claims and information services, particularly in light of the anticipated increased work load due to the drunk driving law, Schaeffer said.

House is ransacked

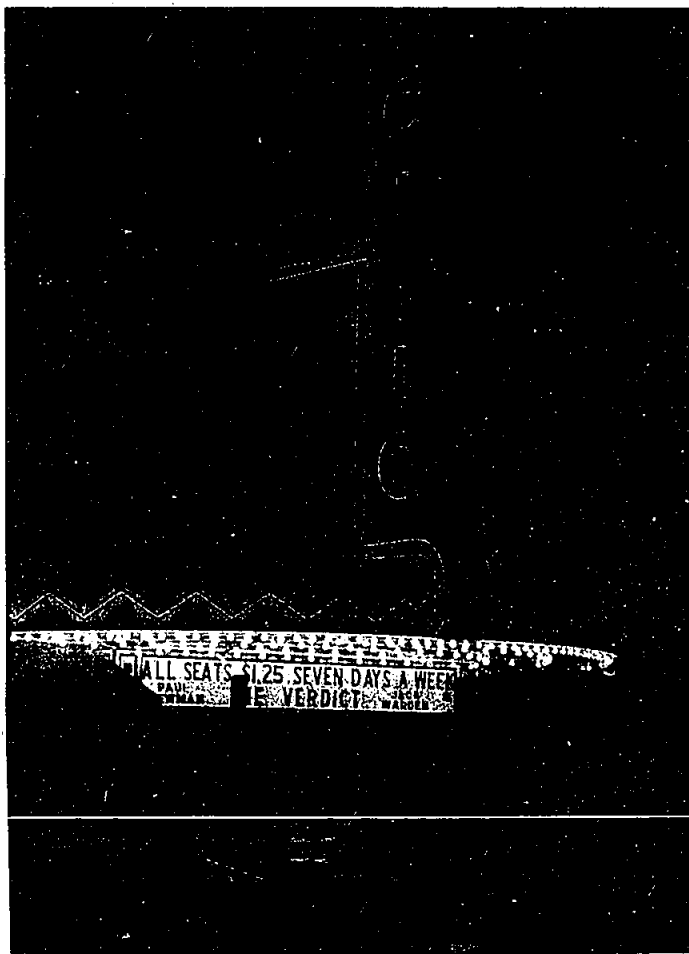
A Farmington resident who promised to look after a neighbor's house on Lamar Street while the neighbor was vacationing in Florida informed police that the house had been entered and burglarized April 3.

The resident told police that the front door of the house opened easily. Upon entering, he found the house ransacked and several items — including a television set, a stereo, a video game and an HBO (Home Box Office) device — missing.

Lawmaker fights to close loophole

Legislation to close a loophole in Michigan's unemployment insurance system that permits voluntary quitters to claim benefits to which they are not entitled is being supported by Representative Sandy Brotherton (R-Farmington).

Men and women who voluntarily leave their jobs and then claim to have been "laid off" from doing yard work, house painting or other such work for friends or relatives can presently claim benefits from their previous employers.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

The old Civic Theater acts as a beacon to remind movie buffs what it used to be like to go to the theater. That tinge of nostalgia, along with the inexpensive admission price, helps to keep them lining up at the door.

Old-fashioned theater spiced with tradition

By Diane Gale
staff writer

A Farmington landmark is up against tough competition.

Keeping the doors open at the Civic Theatre on Grand River is a constant battle against change and modernization for owner E. Gregory Hohler. Today, he adds cable television as a heavyweight contender for the movie house that was erected September 20, 1910.

Hohler's confident the quaint, antiquated theater, that was built by his father Edward, won't be bumped out of the market by fashionable technology, like cable.

"Pay television is going to have some impact, because the more outside means of competition you have, you're going to lose a certain percentage of business," Hohler, a Farmington resident said.

"It (the bill) eliminates this casual-type employment, which is hard to verify, from consideration in paying unemployment benefits."

One of the biggest complaints em-

ployers have had with the unemployment insurance system, Brotherton said, is the ability of people to collect benefits after they quit their jobs.

The Legislature largely eliminated that problem in 1980 by requiring that these people earn \$939 or seven times their weekly benefits from their first employer.

BUT ONE troublesome loophole has remained. The problem arises when a quitter claims to have worked for a friend or

relative who does not pay unemployment taxes. The individual is "laid off" and then is able to collect unemployment insurance from the employer he or she voluntarily left.

There's no penalty for lying, and the MESCC has no way to verify the claim.

"Fortunately, it's not a widespread practice right now," Brotherton said, "but it could become a much more serious problem if we don't rectify our present law."

When a movie goes more than two weeks, a good number of the population are coming from out of the area like Livonia, Redford and Novi," Hohler said.

Hohler BANKS on the theory that

While the new agreement provides officers with at least a 7 percent wage increase in each year of the agreement, salary increases for other public safety employees are expected.

raising taxpayers' costs to about \$73,000 over two years, said City Manager Robert Deadman.

"We made as many concessions as we got anything," said Detective Charles Lee, chief steward of the Teamsters Local 129, which represents the city's 16 public safety patrolmen.

After almost one year of negotiations, union members ratified the new agreement on March 25. The Farmington City Council last week followed suit authorizing City Manager Robert Deadman to also sign the contract.

"This process was unusually lengthy," Lee said. "The union had a lot of demands."

The previous contract expired in mid-1982 before negotiations began, Lee said. Management and union representatives met in about 20 sessions before reaching agreement, he added.

"We got major concessions in about 15 areas," Deadman said, referring to

Trap abuse brings bite from council

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington residents soon will be prohibited from using claw, spring-loading traps in their gardens to ensnare pesky critters.

"Some pets have been injured," said Farmington Public Safety Deputy Director Frank Lauhoff. "We want to eliminate the problem before a child steps in one."

Responding to residents' complaints during the past few years, Farmington City Council members last week introduced an ordinance that would prohibit the use of the traps, which are generally used to capture wildlife like raccoons or opossum.

The leg traps are commonly used by fur trappers and come as wide as one foot in diameter with teeth or serrated edge in the trap's jaws.

Although the traps can be legally used in Michigan, the state Department of Natural Resources requires that the traps be licensed and tagged with the name and address of the owner. Animals also must be caught during the trapping season — which varies according to the animal.

"It's the right of the citizen to hunt and trap animals in season, with the proper animal trap," said Farley Stoyek, manager of the Oakland County Sportsman's Club, an affiliate of the Michigan United Conservation Club.

WITHOUT A city ordinance, however, public safety officers have little power in controlling the use of traps when residents complain about pet injuries, Deadman said.

If adopted, the ordinance would prohibit using the traps outside where pets and children may be harmed, but allows their use inside a building as pest and rodent control, he said.

Under the proposed ordinance, a resident using the traps could be fined up to \$100 and/or 90 days in jail, Lauhoff said.

"But it's up to the judge," he added.

The proposed ordinance would allow officers to confiscate the traps and return them later to the owners if properly tagged with a name and address.

Even though the sportsman's club supports hunting and trapping, residents should use "live traps" to capture animals in their yards, Stoyek said. The "live traps" simply hold the animal — uninjured — until the resident can transport the animal to another area, he said.

The proposed ordinance would allow the use of "live traps."

Residents pay more for police

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington taxpayers will be forking out roughly an additional \$48,000 to help pay salary increases in a new two-year contract between some of Farmington's public safety officers and the city.

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new provisions which clarify and strengthen the public safety department's management rights.

Although the city was successful in gaining many non-economic concessions, union members will receive a 7.2 percent wage increase effective Jan. 1, 1983. This increase, however, will only increase the city's 1982-83 budget by 3.2 percent because the union agreed to a six-month incremental raise freeze in each year of the contract, Deadman said. In the second year, officers will receive a seven percent increase which will have a 3.5 percent effect on the 1983-84 budget, he added.

While union members are happy about the salary increases, "it's about the same in other communities," Lee said. "We've been looking at about 6-to-7 1/2 percent (increases) as a rule."

Some of the new contract language indicating the city's right to go to the home of an officer who has been off sick was a matter of simply putting it in writing, Lee said.

"They've always been able to do that," he said.

The new contract also allows the city to require a two-year college degree and examinations at an assessment center — run by the Michigan State Police — for promotions.

The union also lost some benefits in the city-funded education program, Lee said. The new contract stipulates that the city will pay only \$35 per credit up to four classes per year.

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M. Stepan was delighted with the results of the Observer's Economic Household Pets classified ad placed. "Overwhelming response! I'm always amazed at the polite and courteous people who call. All the puppies were sold by noon the day the paper came out!"

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