



Farmington Observer

Volume 94 Number 77

Thursday, July 7, 1983

Farmington, Michigan

58 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents

River current change spurs cleanup effort

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Approximately 12 Michigan Youth Jobs Corps workers will be in Farmington this summer to construct erosion control barriers in the upper branch of the Rouge River.

The project is designed to prevent the river from changing course and causing problems farther down river.

The youths will be installing gabions (wire baskets filled with large stone) to form a new river bank in the city's Shawasee Park and under the Grand River-Rouge River bridge, east of Farmington Road.

Although the youths' salary is paid by the state, Farmington will be paying approximately \$35,000 for supplies and materials for the erosion projects. But city officials are asking the Michigan Highway Department, which is responsible for the Grand River bridge's maintenance, to reimburse Farmington for the estimated \$12,000 in materials that will be used at that site.

The city, however, will delay purchasing materials or committing itself to the bridge project until authorization comes through, Deadman said.

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL Monday authorized the purchase of 1,240 tons of stone for erosion control. Letters of proposal for the purchase of the stone will be requested from several Detroit trucking firms, Deadman said. The wire baskets will be purchased from an Ohio firm, the only one in the country Deadman is aware of that makes gabions.

"With the city park, we have a kind of unusual problem," Deadman told council members, indicating erosion is becoming a severe problem along that part of the Rouge River.

The river traversing the park is making a severe jog which if allowed to continue would in a few years change the river's direction. The jog in the river's path is causing the water to pick up energy in the park but is reducing the velocity of water moving south of the park, Deadman said. About 840 tons of stone will be used for the city park project.

Gabions are an alternative to putting in a concrete retaining wall along the bank, Deadman said. Unlike the river bank, the gabions do not erode, and, consequently, the river's course remains unchanged.

Officials eye charter change

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington officials may ask voters in November to amend the city charter so that provisions of the employee pension plan are controlled by ordinance rather than by the charter.

After the Employees Retirement System Board of Trustees recently recommended increasing benefits 2 percent, city attorney Robert Kelly found that the city officials did not have the authority to increase benefits because pension levels are controlled by the city charter.

But the courts have also ruled that employee unions may enter into contracts which supersede the requirements of the city charter, said City Manager Robert Deadman.

"The charter no longer controls the pension plan to the extent of the benefits derived from it," he said. "The city cannot hide behind their charters any more."

"The administration of our retirement plan is currently different than the charter provisions as some time ago employee unions of the city negotiated that the city would make the total

contribution to the retirement plan," Deadman indicated in a report to council members. "For this benefit, they (employees) accepted a reduction in wages in an amount equal to the city cost."

So the city's investment counselors have suggested changing charter requirements so most of the provisions of the employee retirement system are controlled by local ordinance, which can be amended by the City Council whenever an increase in benefits is recommended.

"The charter will still say how it (the employee pension plan) would operate," Deadman said.

ALTHOUGH IT appeared that council members were in agreement in asking voters to change the charter, the issue was tabled until the July 18 meeting so the proposed ballot could be revised for the November election. Council members have until late August to decide on putting the ballot question before the electorate, Deadman said.

If voters agree, the new charter law.

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Dave Alampi perches on scaffolding erected to allow workmen to repair the steeple of Farmington's Salem United Church of Christ.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Bell to toll at Salem

By Tom Baer
staff writer

It'll take a few weeks, but the Rev. Lee Tyler hopes to have the bells ringing again at his Salem United Church of Christ, an 81-year-old landmark in downtown Farmington.

A project to rebuild the church's steeple is under way, and, if the pastor has anything to say about it, the plan will include one very important addition—a lightning rod.

That piece of equipment was missing on the dark, stormy afternoon of June 27, when a bolt of lightning struck the 75-foot-high steeple, setting fire to the tower's shingles and scattering its population of bats.

Firefighters from Farmington and Farmington Hills quickly extinguished the blaze, but damage amounted to approximately \$30,000, Tyler said.

"We'll replace it as closely as possible," said Tyler, adding that the steeple had been rebuilt in 1940.

"The church's board of directors is committed to putting a lightning rod up there. I sure hope they do. It wasn't there before."

Services went on as scheduled last Sunday, although Tyler was without his public address system.

"I guess the lightning got into our circuits somehow and shorted out some of our fixtures," he said. "It burned out an old clock in my office and caused some damage to the speakers in the tower which record music and bells."

TYLER DIDN'T have far to look for the church's insurance agent. He's John Clappison, a member of Salem's congregation.

"We're looking into putting a protective wiring over the louvers in the steeple to keep out the bats, birds, whatever," Tyler said. "In the past we've put wire inside the louvers, but the birds just built their nests on the outside."

Witnesses said the lightning struck the steeple just below the hollow, metal cross at the top.

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Brotherton aids Medicaid battle

Michigan could save as much as \$63 million a year if a plan to harness the state's "runaway" Medicaid hospital costs is enacted, a co-sponsor of the legislation said.

State Rep. Sandy Brotherton, R-Farmington, said the measure is similar to a California program which has slashed that state's Medicaid costs by 14 percent in the nearly 12 months it

has been in effect. Brotherton said the legislation will "introduce competition into Medicaid" by requiring hospitals to bid against one another for Medicaid service contracts with the state.

Under the provisions of the bill, the Department of Social Services would be required to establish health care districts throughout the state and to enter

into exclusive contracts with hospitals located within those districts on a competitive bid basis.

"To take into account that different types of hospital care cost different amounts, separate bids would be taken for the various classes of care, such as neo-natal, general surgical and intensive care," Brotherton said.

The contracts would provide a flat per-day charge for hospital care which would include services such as laboratory, X-ray and anesthetics, he added.

"This is a new and, frankly, radically different concept of hospital cost containment," Brotherton said. "As we've watched our Medicaid costs skyrocket in the past 10 years, our approach has been to attempt to cap these costs through administrative rules. Unfortunately, we've been unsuccessful and it is more important than ever to take some bold action to halt the trend."

"We spend more on Medicaid right

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oral quarrel

Who would win battle of the football cats?

OK, sports fans. Here's your chance to sound off about the newest cats in town. The Michigan Panthers are about to enter the USFL playoffs. The last time the Detroit Lions won a championship was 1957.

With the advent of spring football, football fans are debating which Detroit team is better. Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

IF THE PANTHERS AND LIONS PLAYED AGAINST EACH OTHER, WHO WOULD WIN? WHY?

To answer this question call us at 477-5458. You will have until 1 p.m. Friday to answer. To see how other football fans feel about this issue, read Monday's Farmington Observer.

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Your Complete
Guide to Area
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CREATIVE
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GUIDE

In
today's edition
of the
Observer & Eccentric

Soccer tourney set for upcoming weekend

Come and see the stars in action. The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, in cooperation with Livonia Public Schools, will sponsor the Prep Girls' Soccer Classic at 11:30 a.m. Saturday at Livonia Stevenson High School. The event will pit members of O&E's All-Area team from Wayne County against the stars from Oakland County.

Noreen Divens, coach of the state champions from Stevenson, will direct the Wayne team, while Mike Roddy,

coach of regional champion Troy High School, will guide the Oakland squad.

Admission is \$1. Advanced ticket sales are available at the Observer offices in Livonia (on the corner of Levan and Schoolcraft) and the Eccentric offices in Birmingham (on Bowers, off Adams and south of Maple).

Tickets also will be sold at the game on game day.

Stevenson High School is at 33500 W. Six Mile, west of Farmington Road, Livonia.