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New cop shop gets support from study

By Jean Adamczak
staff writer

Auditors have joined the chorus of voices calling for an expansion of police facilities in Farmington Hills.

The management audit recently was presented to the Farmington Hills City Council from Plante & Moran, a certified public accounting firm.

"It is reasonably apparent that the police department is in serious need of additional housing facilities," the report said.

"Many aspects of police operations seem hindered to some degree by the present overcrowding conditions that are prevalent throughout the department."

Although city officials have included police facility expansion as part of the capital improvement program, the only funds dedicated and \$30,000 for architectural drawings.

Areas lacking adequate space in the current facilities include the interrogation rooms, roll call and dispatch rooms, female prison cells and locker rooms.

THIS OVERCROWDING contributes, in some degree, to lower departmental morale, unsafe criminal lockup facilities, high dispatch turnover, inconsiderate crime victim questioning and lack of informant assistance, the report said.

The space problem was recently outlined in the city's proposed budget.

"The department should be operating out of a facility with approximately 35,000 square feet," according to the city manager's report.

The 108-person department currently is working out of a 5,500-square-foot department attached to the city hall.

The shortage, according to city officials, has caused problems in interrogating suspects, detention of prisoners and cramped quarters in the dispatch area.

The communications room is of special concern to city officials because of

plans to install a 911 emergency system. The present facility is just too small to do that, they say.

A high personnel turnover rate also has been recorded in that area of the department because of the bad working conditions.

DUE TO limited financial resources available to increase police staff levels, the department must use each employee to maximize department effectiveness.

In order to do this, the auditors recommend reassigning departmental employees to different divisions or units. The recommended changes are:

- Reassigning to the uniform or investigation group some staff from either the property division or vehicle maintenance unit after these two groups are consolidated. This would result in one officer sharing his or her time between both units.

- Moving one command officer from the traffic division to the patrol division, replacing him or her with a uniformed officer. This change would put a much needed command officer in the patrol division while maintaining the traffic division.

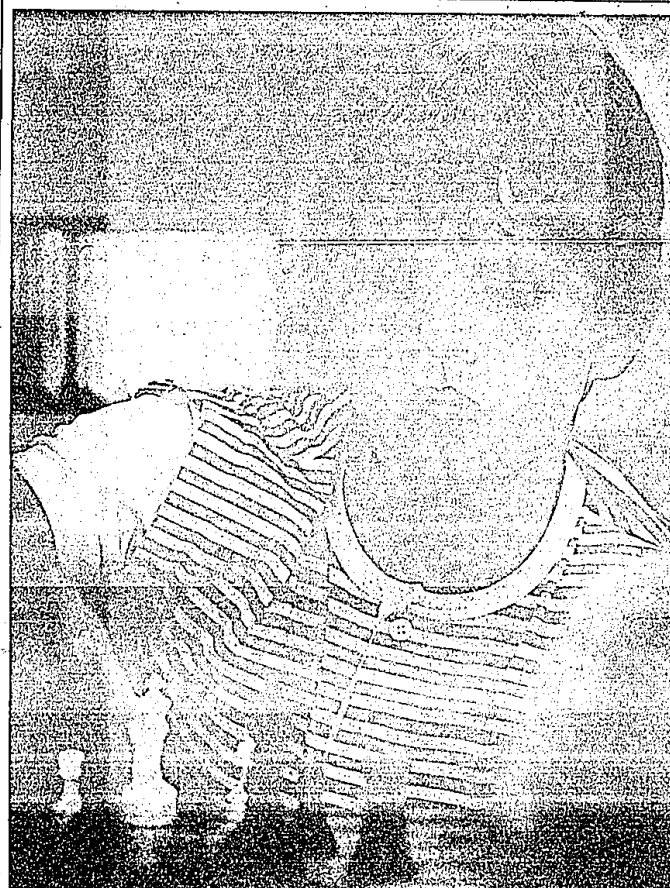
- Taking one or both officers assigned to the Oakland County Organized Crime Task Force and the Michigan Narcotics Enforcement Team and moving them to the uniform or investigations group. Using these officers within the city's police department should greatly benefit city residents.

- Reassigning staff from the juvenile unit to the detective division. For the past three years the detective division's caseload has been approximately four times greater than the juvenile unit's.

- Using civilians in place of sworn officers to perform departmental duties in a noncritical area is another recommendation by the auditors.

- "The objective of increasing civilian utilization is to free up as much of the more costly sworn officer time as possible."

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The gifted curriculum includes a chess tournament for Mark Pintar, a student at Farmington's Eagle Elementary School.

Special programs debated

By Tom Boer
staff writer

The term "gifted" is no great gift to one parent whose children happen to be very bright and highly verbal.

"We'd love to have a different word for gifted," said Pat Girbach, Her son and daughter participate in the Farmington School District's gifted program.

"It smacks of elitism," she said. "The whole history of being gifted in America is that, generally, it's not a popular thing to be."

Added Ellen Harper, who pulled her son out of Farmington's program and placed him in a private school which caters to brainy children, "Gifted is not a popular cause. You don't see fundraisers for the gifted."

"People just don't believe it can be that much of a problem."

But there are problems raising and educating a so-called gifted child. Some of them surfaced at a recent board of education meeting.

Gifted education is not mandated by the state or federal government, as is training for handicapped or retarded children — the opposite end of the special-education spectrum.

And, of course, no out-of-district funds are provided for gifted education.

Each district is allowed to establish its own program. The concept is known as "permissive education," according to Graham E. Lewis, assistant superintendent for special education services in the Farmington District.

No special training or certification is required for teachers who instruct the gifted. That bothers some parents of gifted children.

"Some teachers are willing to work with the gifted children in the classroom, and some are not . . . to the point of denying that they're gifted or have special needs," Girbach said. "Those teachers are a disgrace."

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New city manager gets head start with audit hints

By Jean Adamczak
staff writer

When William Costick assumes his post as Farmington Hills city manager, he will have a ready-made list of recommendations to get him started.

Taking the reins from outgoing City Manager Larry Savage on July 1, Costick will have a recently completed management audit done by Plante & Moran, a certified public accounting firm. The audit is done as a requirement of the city's charter.

One of the audit's main recommendations was that the city manager's

office make more of an effort to communicate with department chiefs.

"We recommend that consideration be given to having formal department manager meetings," the study said. "Establishment of brief periodic department head meetings can provide the opportunity for sharing ideas about city initiatives and developing coordinated responses to council actions."

THE REPORT lauded the city's labor negotiation efforts, which resulted in what the auditors believe are some desirable features built into current contracts.

... the city has maintained the ability to control the determination of quantity and quality of services, work procedures, employee discipline and various rules and regulations not in conflict with (labor) agreements," the report said.

Completion of the city's personnel policy manual, which was developed several years ago but never implemented, was suggested to the personnel department.

"The benefits to be derived from completing this document include not only the assertion of certain management rights, but also improved employee relations," the report said.

BROADER AUTHORITY for the personnel manager was recommended for better communication and enforcement of city personnel policies.

Improving the annual personnel review process also was suggested to the personnel department.

"In some instances, the forms are utilized, but their effectiveness is limited because of the supervisor not actually performing a critical review, resulting in a lack of documentation for deficiencies which may later surface," the study said.

The fact that grievances and complaints seldom get into personnel files is a related concern confronted by the study.

"It is important that complete records be maintained, and that supervisors be trained to perform a complete employee evaluation."

THE PERSONNEL department has a "myriad of uses" for office automation, which the study recommended for that department.

The report found that duties of the city clerk's office, which includes voter registration, election and records administration, minutes of meetings and license administration, are all ably performed.

Redistribution of certain clerk activities to appropriate departments was suggested to ensure a smooth transition when the clerk eventually retires.

Improved word processing equipment and computer support for voter registration and business license operations also were suggested for the clerk's office.

"The combination of these capabilities should relieve the clerk's office of the need to maintain redundant manual records," the report said.

Estimated completion times for implementing these recommendations range from changes in management style of the city manager's office (which can be started immediately) to four months for the suggested automation changes.

Each of these suggestions will be followed up with study sessions and administrative review meetings by city council members.

League chief outlines philosophy

By Mary Lou Callaway
special writer

If you're new in the West Bloomfield-Farmington area, what do you look for?

Lisa Schwartz said she looked for women "with similar values, ideas and priorities who don't put homework first."

That search five years ago led to the local League of Women Voters (LWV). Schwartz, recently elected president of the West Bloomfield-Farmington area LWV, is a tall, slender blond woman with a doctorate degree. She teaches American government at the University of Detroit.

"It was my minor in college. I love political science," she said. "You know, you can have one professor who turns you on. I'm appalled at some students in my classes who believe government is run by and for the elite. I try to bring them on to join a (political) party or run for office."

SCHWARTZ doesn't just teach involvement — she believes in it. Two years ago, Schwartz ran for the Oakland County Commission as a Democrat in Republican territory. She lost to the Republican incumbent. Now she sits aside all party politics as president of the LWV, which supports issues but never candidates.

Only league board members are so restricted to run for office. Others may, and do, hold office, run for office or work for candidates.

"We must use in on our young people, get them registered to vote," Schwartz said. "Politics is a game, not a spectator sport. We like politics, once you start, you can't stop."

WHEN SCHWARTZ got her teacher's degree at Northwestern University, she immediately was recruited by the U.S. State Department to work at the U.S. Embassy in Japan. She met her future husband there and he earned her master's degree at Wayne State University and

taught night classes. Then she went for the doctorate so she could teach on days.

But her husband's job intervened when they were sent to Venezuela. "I had done the research. I mailed my dissertation on the Michigan State Senate from there (Venezuela) to Wayne."

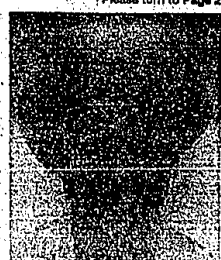
Now, she teaches undergraduate during the day and leads night seminars for mid-career professionals. "Enthusiasm rubs off," she said.

SCHWARTZ especially is enthusiastic over the new direction the national LWV and local leagues are taking, which will enhance their capabilities.

"New people are showing here. I see three new bloods. We'll increase our local recruitment activities again this year. We'll register voters again at the fall 'festival booth' (in West Bloomfield)," she said.

The league also prepares and circulates voter lists, information on ballot proposals, sponsors candidates night and carries on with education projects promoting, not just voters, but informed voters.

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Lisa Schwartz, LWV leader

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