



# Farmington Observer

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## Secrecy decision debated by legal experts

**By Julie Brown**  
staff writer

Questions continued to surface this week concerning the future of Gordon Lewis, director of the Farmington Community Library, and the Library Board's refusal to make its decisions public.

A memo distributed Thursday to library staff refers to Lewis as being on "vacation."

The Farmington Community Library Board of Trustees met in a closed session Wednesday with Lewis. Library trustees refused, however, to make public any actions taken during the private meeting.

"During Mr. Lewis' vacation, Mrs. Beverly Papal, assistant director, will be directing the activities of both libraries," the Thursday memo reads. "Any questions on matters regarding library affairs should be directed to Mrs. Papal."

The memo is signed by Ernie Sauter, president of the Library Board. Other Library Board members are Lois Carey, Jim Wibby and Jonathan Grant. "I have no comment on that last evening," said Jim Ebel, attorney for the Library Board of Trustees, when asked about the Wednesday meeting.

Ebel also declined to comment on the reasons why Lewis had another attorney, Ashley Lipson, present at the Wednesday meeting, which was held at the Farmington Hills library branch.

"I couldn't answer that. I have no comment to make on it," Ebel was asked if he is familiar with

the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

"Yes, I'm aware of that act," he said. "If you are aware of the act, you would not be asking those questions. We are acting completely within the act."

**OTHER LEGAL EXPERTS** interpret the law differently, however.

A spokeswoman for the state's attorneys general office says that in general results of public meetings have to be announced.

"What's instructive here is the minutes of that meeting are not available to the public," said Susan Iannotti, a Michigan assistant attorney general.

The specifics of any discussion held during the closed session are not available to the public. All formal actions, however, must be taken in the open.

"If action is going to follow, all action must be taken in a public meeting. If they make a decision, that must be in an open meeting."

The assistant attorney general said the law is clear.

"Section 5 (which covers the allowable reasons for closed sessions) only protects the process of deliberation and not the process of action."

A suspension would be considered an action, Iannotti said.

But it is difficult to assess individual cases, she said.

"We are not in a position to say whether a particular body violated the law or not. We may not have all the facts. But I can give you the general principles that apply."

A public body may, under the Michigan law, go into a closed session "to consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, when the named person requests a closed hearing."

A spokeswoman for a nationally recognized press organization concurred with Iannotti's opinion.

"The statute does specifically say that decisions shall be made at an open meeting," said Elaine English, director of the Freedom of Information Service Center, a special project of the Reporters' Committee for Freedom of the Press in Washington, D.C.

"There is no such qualifying language," English said of the Michigan law. "There is for the deliberations, but not for the decision."

The Reporters' Committee is a voluntary, non-profit association of reporters and editors from throughout

the country. It serves as a clearing-house and legal defense center.

**THE GENERAL PURPOSE** of the state's Open Meetings Act is to provide access to the workings of government.

"Obviously, (it's) to provide access to bodies maintained by public funds, and to be a conduit to the public," said Forrest Inks, assistant to the executive director for the Michigan Press Association. "Quite often, people like to keep the public in the dark, but that's not fair."

The law provides for "access by the public, as an accounting of their money."

"Since it is not convenient for all the public to do that, the press becomes the means by which they are informed," Inks said.

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## Papal in charge

**By Julie Brown**  
staff writer

Answers to the question "Who's in charge here?" have been hard to come by in recent days at the Farmington Community Library.

Library Director Gordon Lewis met in a closed session with the Farmington Community Library Board of Trustees Wednesday. The library trustees refused to reveal what decisions, if any, were made during the 50-minute meeting. (See related story.)

"I am the assistant director, and I am operating in that capacity," librarian Beverly Papal said Thursday, when asked who is running the libraries. "At any time Mr. Lewis is not in the building, I am in that capacity."

"Any questions are to be referred to Mr. (Jim) Ebel," she said.

Ebel, attorney for the Library Board of Trustees, has refused to discuss any actions taken during the Wednesday meeting.

A memo distributed to library staff Thursday states the following:

"During Mr. Lewis' vacation, Mrs. Beverly Papal, assistant director, will be directing the activities of both libraries. Any questions on matters regarding library affairs should be directed to Mrs. Papal."

The memo is signed by Ernie Sauter, president of the Library Board. Other members of the board are Lois Carey, Jim Wibby and Jonathan Grant.

A representative of the Plante & Moran accounting firm attended the Wednesday meeting of the Library Board. Officials have indicated that an audit of the library system's financial records will be done.

## Roeper chief keeps the flame

**By Dave Varga**  
staff writer

Pamela Dart had some big shoes to fill when she took over the reins of Roeper City and Country School in Bloomfield Hills and Birmingham.

Five years ago, Dart was named head of the lower school and about a year later she became head of the entire preschool through 12th-grade educational institution for the city and township that was started by George and Annemarie Roeper in 1941.

"Was it difficult to follow the founders in running the school?"

"It was told it might be difficult, that's the prevailing wisdom," Dart said. "To me, though, it was not difficult. It is a unique position when you can lead a school where you know the founders."

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STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer  
Some days just don't have enough hours to schedule all the appointments and work Pamela Dart faces as head of Roeper City and Country School.

## Soccer club loses site, eyes parcel at Spicer's

**By Joanne Maliszewski**  
staff writer

After seven years at the same site on the corner of 14 Mile and Drake Roads in Farmington Hills, the Farmington Soccer Club is searching for a new home.

The club's search has been prompted by the Farmington Board of Education's decision to sell the 38.48 acres the club has been using as a base of operations since 1978.

"The board authorized the administration to sell it," said Superintendent Lewis Schulman. "We have a sign there. But we haven't opened (advertisements) yet. We are just finishing our preparations."

School and soccer club officials expect enough lag time before a sale is completed so the club's approximately 600-700 participating youngsters can continue to use the soccer fields for both the spring and fall seasons.

But club officials are not waiting for the sale to take place.

"We have taken the attitude that we can't wait," said John Bailey, soccer club president. "We are looking for alternate sites."

**TOPPING THE LIST** of potential new homes for the club is Farmington Hills' Spicer property on Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile, Bailey said. City officials are working with citizen committees to determine how the 212-acre parcel will be used.

If 10 acres of the Spicer property was used for "youth activities," for example, there would be enough room for four soccer and softball fields and two baseball fields, Bailey said.

Farmington Hills "has very few facilities, if any, for youth activities," Bailey said. "With the Spicer property coming along we are wondering if the city could include plans for youth activities on that property."

"The majority of the groups who have evaluated the property say they want the property to remain passive. Maybe Spicer isn't the place for ball fields. But it is an opportunity and something we believe we can't let go by."

On the other hand, Bailey said, city officials have indicated to him that there is at least one site that "we might use and develop as a park for all sports. We're saying that's great, that's holding it not to say the school district no longer has a need for the acreage, Schulman added.

The school district originally purchased the property for a future high school, Schulman said. But enrollment projections indicate little need for a fourth high school in the district and an equal lack of need for an additional middle school, he added.

If the school district finds a buyer for the property, the soccer club would not be reimbursed for the approximately \$30,000 worth of improvements — four ballfields, signs and a parking lot — made on the property, Bailey said.

"We knew that going in. We were trying to make it the best facility we could," Bailey said. "Everything you see there that we use we have paid for."

Ideally, Bailey said he would like to see the city of Farmington Hills purchase the acreage and use it as a sports center.

"If they develop the 12 Mile corridor, wouldn't it be great to say to corporations, 'we have a great community, including a great park?'"

"We can't blame them. That's such prime property."

The property has grown in value because it is along the city's growth commercial corridor.

Schulman said the board's proposed sale is a timely venture when property along the corridor is growing in popularity and value.

Besides the financial benefit of selling the property (which as a school holding is not taxable), the school district no longer has a need for the acreage, Schulman added.

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STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer  
Pamela Dart leads Roeper City and Country School into a "mature stage" that may mean leaving the familiar domes of the Bloomfield Hills campus.

## Plea made to aid sick youth

**By Shirlee Rose Iden**  
staff writer

He can say "baby" and "up" and even a few words in Polish. "Help me" is not yet in Brandon Weiss' vocabulary.

But Arthur and Gayle Weiss, parents of the 21-month-old Southfield toddler who is a victim of aplastic anemia, are appealing for help for

their young son whose only chance for life is a bone marrow transplant.

And Brandon's physicians at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak and in Ann Arbor are searching meticulously all around the world for a donor to help the small boy.

Chances of finding a suitable donor match are about one in 10,000, according to Dr. Charles Main, pediatric hematologist at Beaumont Hospital.

The necessary surgery between non-family members is rated "dangerous, complicated and highly experimental," for the marrow recipient, by Main, who says it's a simple, overnight procedure for the donor.

For Brandon, it's his only chance since testing has already ruled out family members. His immune system is impaired and he has recently begun to ooze blood from his gums and into

his stomach.

"Anybody that's out there is a potential donor," said Arthur Weiss, the boy's father, "and time is of the essence." Potential donors are not being charged any costs for the testing.

**APLASTIC ANEMIA** occurs when the bone marrow which makes red blood cells, white blood cells and pla-

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