

Farmington Observer

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Auto dealer faces fraud charges

By Casey Hans staff writer

The owner of Bob Saks Oldsmobile and Bob Saks Toyota faces energy-related felony charges that may cost him his General Motors franchise, if he is convicted.

A Farmington Hills businessman for 12 years, Robert Mechigian, 51, was ordered to stand trial on one count of solicitation of a felony and two counts of energy fraud following conclusion of his preliminary examination in 47th

District Court before Judge Margaret Schaefer of Farmington Jan. 14. He is free on personal bond, pending trial. Arraignment is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 31 in Oakland County Circuit Court.

If convicted, Mechigian faces up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine on the solicitation charge, and up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine on each energy fraud charge.

Mechigian was charged with energy fraud despite his filing under a state utility amnesty statute disallowing

such charges, his attorney said.

The defendant was arraigned in district court Sept. 23 on a warrant issued by the Michigan Attorney General's office and signed by Assistant Michigan Attorney General Marc Blumer. Blumer was not available for comment last week.

State prosecutors entered the case in 1984, when the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office "declined to issue a warrant," according to Sgt. Thomas Meekins of the Michigan State Police.

"Our office requested the attorney

general to review the case," Meekins said. Mechigian was bound over for trial on the original state warrant charges.

MECHIGIAN IS accused of arranging, or attempting to arrange, the altering of utility meters at several Oakland County car dealers. He also allegedly split the proceeds for several utility tamperings done by William Harold Jones of Taylor, according to reports of Jones' testimony at the examination.

Jones, a Taylor contractor, is the principal tampering figure who offered to alter utility meters for a \$700 fee. Jones pleaded guilty to charges of obtaining money under false pretenses in Wayne and Oakland counties several years ago. The charge was changed to energy fraud, and Jones was sentenced to two years' probation in exchange for immunity from further prosecution, Meekins said.

The potential franchise loss is "a

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Farmington FOCUS

If you have a news item or an idea for a feature story or an action picture with a Farmington area connection, send a note to our downtown office at 3203 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

NOW a pilot.
Air National Guard 1st Lt. Stephen Markovich of Farmington Hills graduated from Air Force pilot training at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, and received silver wings.

He is scheduled to serve with the 168th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, Ohio.

ON the dean's list.
Two Farmington Hills residents, Kristine Furman and Janette Fleck, were named to the dean's list at Northern Michigan University, Marquette.

David Brown of Farmington was named to the dean's list at the University of Toledo.

Catherine Bleh, Maureen Higgins and Franco Vitall of Farmington Hills were named to the dean's list at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Mich.

FREE well-water-analysis kits are available at Dr. David Clark's Farmington Hills Dental Associates office, 30330 12 Mile. The kits analyze all components of your water, including fluoride content. The state performs the analysis free. Postage is the only cost to the homeowner.

MOVING on.
Carol Mierzwinski and Shari McNeese of Farmington Hills have graduated from the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Both received a bachelor of science degree in psychology and sociology.

NEW graduates.
Anthony Kahn, a Farmington Harrison High School graduate, has earned a juris doctor degree from the Thomas M. Cooley School of Law in Lansing, Kahn, who earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Wayne State University in Detroit, plans to specialize in property and finance.

Paul Heffernan of Farmington and Martin Lesyon of Farmington Hills have successfully completed the two-year electronic engineering program at the National Education Center, National Institute of Technology, Livonia.

ON the move.
Ann Arbor resident Raymond Tooley, a North Farmington High School graduate, was named controller of United Health System (UHS), a health services consortium of William Beaumont, Oakwood and St. John hospitals.

UHS operates SolistCare, a 30,000-member preferred-provider organization. It is negotiating an affiliation agreement with Group Health Plan, a health maintenance organization with 41,000 subscribers.

THEY'RE NEW CPAs.
The Michigan State Board of Accountancy reports that Kathryn Daily and Dennis Wolf of Farmington Hills have earned their certified public accountant certificates.

REMINDER: The Farmington Observer's office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. We're at 3203 Grand River, in the back of the Metro Bank in Downtown Farmington.

FOOTNOTES: The first edition of the first traffic sign at Farmington Road and Grand River was installed in 1937.

Talk's theme: public transit

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

If public transit is important to Michigan residents, then it's time to get in touch with members of the U.S. Congress as they begin their attack on the federal budget with automatic cuts in spending, said Carol Norris, deputy director of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

"We have just about gone to the limit, and we can't make up the gap of the federal level," Norris told about 30 residents and members of Detroit-area chapters of the League of Women Voters Thursday at the Farmington Hills branch of the Farmington Community Library.

Norris' discussion of the future of public transit in Michigan was sponsored by the West Bloomfield-Farmington Area League of Women Voters.

"If we believe public transportation is important, we have to say so," said Norris, appointed deputy director in February 1983, after almost 10 years as a traffic specialist in the state House of Representatives.

Since the early 1980s, the federal government has consistently decreased its aid to public transit while the state has consistently increased its share to make up the difference. The time is here when the state can no longer fill the gap, Norris said.

THE ADVENT of the Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction act — mandating automatic cuts in every department and government program — that Congress passed and President Reagan signed just before Christmas, will spell the dawn of severe cuts in federal support of public transit, Norris said.

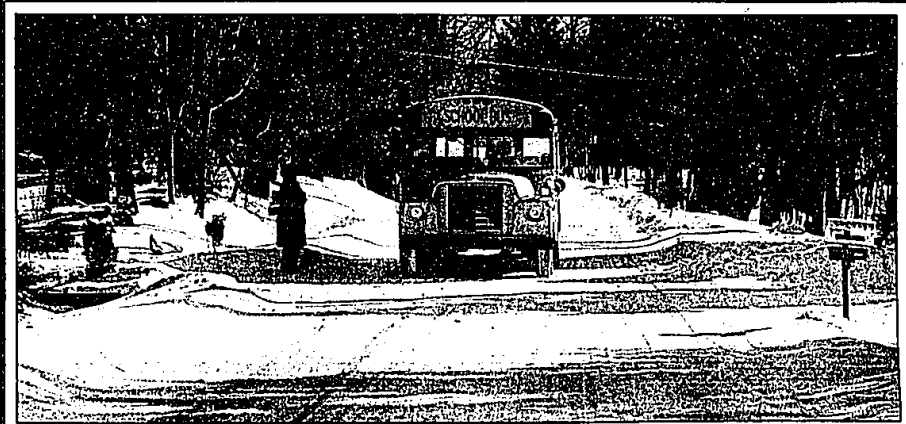
A high point for federal funding of public transit was 1981. Since that time, the amount has annually decreased under the Reagan administration.

With Gramm-Rudman, the state can expect at least a 16 percent cut in fi-



Carol Norris

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This winter scene was photographed along Howard Road in Farmington Hills.

RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Snow days

Deciding when the weather must prevail

By Casey Hans staff writer

Based on past performance, Mother Nature is sure to offer Farmington-area students a snow day or two this school year.

Officials estimate an average two to three snow days each year close their schools.

Closing schools is not a simple decision. "Schools are not closed at the first whiff of the snow," said Lewis Schulman, who just retired as Farmington's superintendent of schools. "Parents are dependent on a decent decision."

Decisions are made jointly with information from local law enforcement officials, superintendents, school board members and district transportation staff members who are on the roads as early as 4 a.m. monitoring conditions.

Decisions are normally made no later than 6:30 a.m., local school officials said.

"I AM in constant contact with other area superintendents," said Michael Shiltier, superintendent of the Clarenceville Schools.

'Schools are not closed at the first whiff of the snow. Parents are dependent on a decent decision.'

— Lewis Schulman Farmington Schools

Both Clarenceville and Farmington school transportation staffs report up-to-date information from the field. Schulman said he sometimes drove around to get a personal feel for the situation. "It's not a single person sitting in a comfortable house making the decision," he said.

"We close schools because of hazardous conditions, either in walking to school or riding a bus," Shiltier said.

Schulman said not only snow, but cold, plays havoc with decisions in closing schools. In 1983-84, Farmington Schools closed one day because of excessive cold weather for the first time in 10 years.

This also occurred in 1984-85, Schulman said. "The community ac-

cepted this very gracefully," he said.

SCHULMAN CITED a concern for very young students who don't know to keep exposed skin covered during extreme weather conditions.

Most school districts in Oakland County use the LEIN (Law Enforcement Information Network) to get school closing information to students and their families. District officials contact a local Michigan State Police post, which transmits the information to appropriate area radio stations for broadcast.

Having a meteorology hobby helps Walled Lake School Superintendent Leroy Bartman forecast the weather for potential snow days in his 55-square-mile district. The

Farmington resident monitors weather as he travels to work on snowy days, although the district's director of auxiliary services "has the authority" to call snow days.

This is Bartman's first winter as Walled Lake superintendent. "I call (the school) board president," Bartman said, "and from there we use a triangular fan-out system."

The military-type fan-out is designed to advise all appropriate administrators within one hour, he said.

COLLEGE STUDENTS traditionally receive fewer winter days off than their younger counterparts.

At Oakland Community College, public safety officials rely on road safety information from the Michigan State Police, which they receive at 3:4 a.m., according to George Carlsson, director of college communications. He estimates the college closes one or two snow days each winter.

Administrative officers from each campus hold a telephone conference call, making the final deci-

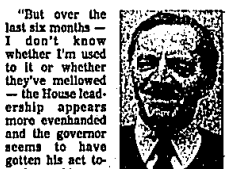
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Brotherton will seek 7th term

State Rep. W.V. "Sandy" Brotherton confirmed Friday he will seek reelection to the State House for a seventh term.

The Farmington resident has represented the Farmington area in the State House for 12 years and the Southfield Township committees of Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms and Franklin for four years.

"I wasn't sure whether I would seek another term. But now there's no doubt," said Brotherton, 63. "At the start of my current term, I was considering not running again because I was just dissatisfied with the way in which the House was being run, with the way the leadership was handling things. The partnership politics was completely out of line. The governor also was in turmoil over his tax plan.



Sandy Brotherton

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM constituents in early December also helped shape his decision to run again, Brotherton said.

"I still enjoy the work," he added. "I maybe haven't enjoyed the work on the

House floor so much but I have enjoyed the committee work. Public health is still an area that needs attention and one that I've had an interest in for many years. It's an area in which I consider myself pretty knowledgeable."

As representative of the 6th District, Brotherton has served as a member of the Public Health Committee, the Economic Development and Energy Committee, the Public Utilities Committee and the City Government Committee. He is also serving on a special organ transplant policy committee.

Brotherton has served 12 years on the Public Health Committee and is its senior member. In those years, he has helped develop the State Public Health Code, the Hospital Bed Reduction Plan, and various health care cost containment proposals.

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