

AT RIGHT: Harrison High School students Gary Weissman and Rachel Lichtman confer on a municipal issue during a mock city council meeting on Student Government Day Tuesday in Farmington Hills. Role playing was the rule of the day with Weissman stepping in as a council member and Lichtman as city manager. The mock council meeting was attended by the students' real-life counterparts, such as City Manager William Costick and City Clerk JoAnn Reynolds. Students were asked to debate some of the city's continuing issues, widening 12 Mile and adding a new I-695 interchange in Farmington Hills were major discussion points.



Students debate issues in the Hills

IT WAS business as usual at Farmington Hills City Hall Tuesday with one exception — high school students were running the city.

Thirty-six students — 18 each from North Farmington and Harrison high schools — spent the day on the job working with and learning

from city officials and staff.

The fifth annual Student Government Day, sponsored by the Farmington Rotary Club and the Farmington Elks Lodge, in cooperation with the city. The daylong program is designed to expose students to the responsibilities and duties of city government and its functions.

Participating students assume the roles of the elected and appointed city officials, such as mayor, city manager, police chief and zoning supervisor. Students spend much of the day with their adult counterparts learning and attending to the usual activities within the department to which they are assigned.

Student Government Day began with an orientation at city hall where students met members of the city council, district court and other city officials. Students then joined their designated adult counterparts and delved into the day's business.

FOLLOWING A luncheon at the Farmington Elks, where 47th District Court Judge Michael Hand of Farmington was the featured speaker, students returned to city council chambers where they conducted their own council meeting, complete with a hefty agenda.

Students were charged with debating three key issues that have been continuing debates before city council.

The widening of 12 Mile, between

Farmington and Haggerty, dominated the first portion of the students' city council meeting. Students were asked to discuss whether the office thoroughfare should be widened to five lanes or four with a landscaped boulevard. But students were asked

to be realistic and develop ideas for financing the big project.

A second issue, construction of an additional I-695 interchange into Farmington Hills, forced students to consider the effects of bringing a freeway exit loaded with traffic onto

city roads. Students concluded the council meeting with a discussion of whether the city's longstanding building height limit should continue and what type of effect will the policy have on future development.



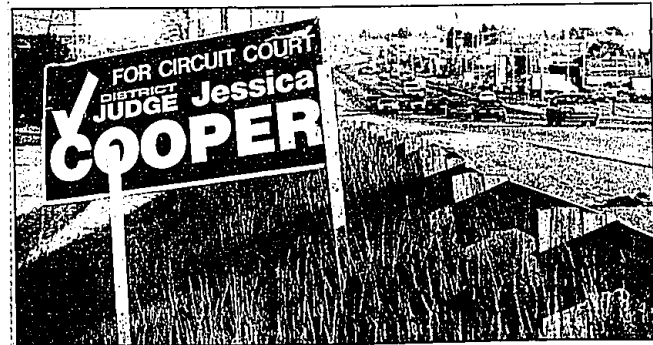
Farmington Hills Assistant City Manager David Call (left) and assistant to the city manager Karen Birkholz watch the mock city council proceedings.

Staff photos
by
Randy Borst



Conferring are North Farmington High seniors Howard Rankin (left), acting as city assessor, Todd Mulberger, acting as district court judge, and Sue Gunderson and Julie Bouster, acting as council members.

Hills considering a fee to take down signs



Oakland Circuit Judge-elect Jessica Cooper's campaign sign is one of few that as of Monday was still standing in Farmington Hills. But

city officials are leaving Cooper's sign standing as a test to determine the length of time candidates are taking to remove their signs.

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signs, including political, in rights of way.

COUNCIL WATCHER Aldo Vagnozzi asked council to wait for another election before enacting any ordinance. If the problem continues in another election, then an ordinance would be in order, he said.

"They ought to let candidates know where rights of way are on various roads," Vagnozzi said.

The Nov. 4 general election was the first in the city's 13-year history that political sign placement has been allowed.

Nudging and threats of a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union prompted the Farmington Hills City Council to adopt an amendment to the city code.

The amendment defines political signs as "announcing or advertising the candidacy of persons running for public office or issues to be voted upon at any federal, state, municipal or school election."

ment of political signs in public rights of way, the amendment exempts political signs from the city's general sign prohibition.

The zoning ordinance that, through interpretation, historically prohibited political signs in Farmington Hills, remains in effect for all signs other than political.

THE AMENDMENT that allows political sign placement is somewhat general, offering none of the restrictions on size and when the signs could be placed and taken down that had originally dominated most council discussions regarding the signs.

But at the time council members decided to avoid placing restrictions on political sign placement, they made it clear that should problems arise, it wouldn't be difficult to return to the drawing board and develop restrictions.

The ACLU was joined by Farmington Hills resident David Harron — who originally complained about the city's prohibitive ordinance — in driving home the point that the city's traditional prohibition on political signs was unconstitutional.

An ACLU representative said the city's political sign prohibition "denies people their most basic freedom of speech." The former prohibition, he said, denied residents equal protection because it allowed commercial speech in the form of real estate signs.

Though the city's sign ordinance was adopted in 1972, several discussions over the years have centered on political signs. Council members consistently opposed efforts to allow political signs.

Most opposition to political signs in Farmington Hills has simply been because of what council members have considered as unsightly appearance, with signs dotted on lawns and other areas throughout the city.

"FROM OUR standpoint, it is a lot of visual pollution," Rowe said, adding that in some cases the signs block motorists' sight, especially when placed in rights of way near intersections.

From a zoning point of view, restrictions on political signs would be useful for size, where they can be placed and when they should be taken down, Rowe added.

Trustees receive a sample of teacher training

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learning.
● focus on the learning.

month period. All sessions are held during regular school hours, which Lewis said limits the number of participants because substitute teachers must be scheduled.

The sessions teach things like the four essential elements of instruction, which "all have to be there for (teaching) quality," Swenarton said:

- selecting a teaching objective that is the proper level of difficulty,
- teach to the objective, or "you have a destination, and you can get there and back with no monkey business,"
- monitor the entire classroom's

SWENARTON GAVE the board a sample lesson and a sample of a specific unit involving active participation, a skill in which teachers learn to involve the entire group of students throughout a class.

Tips including the time teachers give for a student to respond called "wait time" — and a suggested maximum 10-minute lecture block were also stressed in the presentation.

The Farmington Public Schools program takes its lead from colleges and universities nationwide that are currently using the ITIP model to train those studying the teaching profession. Many local districts send

their teachers to a county training program, unlike Farmington which has not only the on-site training, but an in-class support system for teachers as well.

Although many new incoming teachers will be familiar with the training being done in Farmington because of their college-level training, Lewis called for a "definite set of requirements" for newcomers until their 2-year probationary period is completed.

"We have a tremendous responsibility," Lewis said. "We have the obligation to bring that teacher to a level of competency."

National reports, including those from the Carnegie Foundation, have recently focused attention on teaching skills, Swenarton said. Sixteen

more reports on education are scheduled for release this year, she added, calling the national attention to teaching skills.

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club availability of fast food and arcade games. The possibility of obtaining alcohol at party stores is another lure, Nebus said.

Many of those who gather along the business stretch later try to rent a motel room nearby in Farmington Hills or Southfield for late-night partying. "But the motels have been successful in screening out those who they have reason to believe want a room just for partying,"

"All have a growing realization that the teacher is the key," she said. Some current teachers and administrators have questioned the

Nebus said.

Increased surveillance along Orchard Lake Road will continue as long as problems persist. "As long as these types of activities are occurring, we'll be out there in force — with both uniformed and plainclothes officers," Nebus said.

"We feel confident it's only a temporary problem."

THE MAJORITY of businesses along the stretch have been "very cooperative in calling us and signing

complaints when necessary," Nebus said.

Tally Hall manager Kimberly Kain said mall merchants are "very pleased with the cooperation from the police and with the fact that the police are willing to work with us and our full-time security force."

As far as Tally Hall merchants are concerned, it's business as usual. As Kain put it: "Sgt. Nebus seems to feel the situation is under control — and I tend to agree. The police have been right on top of the situation."

Orchard Lake under surveillance