

# Portage parks impress Hills visitors

By Joanne Mellazewski  
staff writer

"Portage was great."  
That's how city manager William Costick described the mid-Michigan community he and other Farmington Hills officials visited May 21 as part of Mayor's Exchange Day, sponsored annually by the Michigan Municipal League in conjunction with Michigan Week.

A week earlier, Farmington Hills officials hosted Portage Mayor Charles Marschke and other administrators and elected officials.

Costick said he was impressed with Portage, similar in size to Farmington Hills but which has about 20,000 fewer people. Portage is near Kalamazoo.

"They have similar problems," Costick said, referring particularly to traffic concerns.

Costick said he was particularly

impressed with the Portage fire headquarters, training programs for fire and police officers and the city's parks.

"They have a lot more open space. They have lakes in the southern portion of the city and a state game preserve," Costick said.

"DURING THE parks was a boon, Costick said, in light of Farmington Hills' plans for Heritage Park and Pioneer Park.

Portage's senior citizen and volunteer programs also struck a chord of interest in Costick. Portage, for example, has a senior citizens activity center.

Richard Marinucci, Hills fire chief, said his trip to Portage was "absolutely worthwhile."

"I always like to get out and visit other cities," he said. "You always pick up new ideas that you try to adapt to a particular situation. Everybody does something a little different or is trying a new kind of program."

More times than not, the visits reinforce just how advanced fire service is in Farmington Hills. "I often find we're on the right track, doing a lot of good and innovative things," Marinucci said.

He said his department compares favorably with Portage's. "We're a step ahead in some cases and they're a very successful department," he said. "The comparison makes me feel better about my own department."

**'You always pick up new ideas that you try to adapt.'**

— Richard Marinucci  
Hills Fire Chief

THE TWO cities are about at the same stage in developing a special emergency response team to handle hazardous material and special rescue incidents.

"Among the questions we're trying to answer is, 'At what point do you buy certain types of equipment and phase it in?'" Marinucci said.

You also have to coordinate training with equipment.

"It'd do us no good to buy elaborate equipment if we didn't have our people trained to use it. Nor would it do any good to train our people in

using certain equipment if it was too expensive to buy," Marinucci said.

So far, Farmington Hills' special emergency response team, dubbed SERT, is trained in basic things like fuel oil spills.

"Ultimately, we want to be able to stop hazardous material leaks completely, put out certain types of hazardous material fires and contain product runoff before it enters the sewer system," Marinucci said.

Marinucci also was impressed with Portage's beginning development of a fire training ground, complete with a smoke and burn building, an old tanker for simulated tanker fires and old semi trucks to create a maze for air pack training.

A TRAINING ground is something Marinucci highlighted in his department's master plan.

"We now have homes donated by developers where we hold practice

burns. But sooner or later, we'll need some place to train. I pulled some good ideas from Portage's training ground that I've filed in the back of my head," Marinucci said.

Portage has three fire stations, 29 full-time members and 45 part-time firefighters. Farmington Hills has four fire stations, 14 full-time members and 80 part-time firefighters.

Portage handled 1,384 fire emergency runs last year. Farmington Hills had 3,255.

The Portage Police Department also played the interest of Farmington Hills officials. A data sheet, provided to residents by the Portage Police Department, will be adapted for Farmington Hills, Costick said.

"We do profit from looking at other cities," he said.

Staff writer Bob Sklar contributed to this story.

## Mayor 'didn't feel like a stranger'

By Casey Hane  
staff writer

It was a good, old-fashioned bartering of ideas.

Riverview Mayor Peter Rotteveel "didn't feel like a stranger coming to Farmington," where officials have "made the best of the changing times."

Farmington Mayor William Hartsock was impressed with the unique qualities of Riverview, including the city's landfill, tactfully hidden by a city-operated ski slope and surrounded by 200,000 houses.

Both city officials said their respective trips during Mayor's Exchange Day May 20-21 were successful. The annual event is sponsored by the Michigan Municipal League in conjunction with Michigan Week. The cities selected each other before the League pulled names and matched cities at random in a drawing.

**'Sometimes . . . an older community can get lost and swallowed up.'**

— Peter Rotteveel  
Riverview mayor

Hartsock said Farmington tries to visit a city "the same size as ours" each year, or one that has other similarities. The downriver community of Riverview has about 15,000 residents and is 4.4 square miles — slightly larger than Farmington.

ROTTEVEEL WAS particularly impressed with the 47th District Court on 10 Mile, which is a revamped school building. Riverview officials recently purchased a 60,000-square-foot, unused school building to house city and court personnel, who are "busting at the seams."

"It's a really good feeling to see what can be done," he said.

Rotteveel also eyed with interest Farmington's ordinances against junk vehicles and a recently enacted ordinance prohibiting "for sale" cars to be parked within the city limits. He said Riverview may use Farmington's ordinances as models.

The various blends of Farmington, between historical and new, and residential and commercial, was something the downriver mayor liked. "I was quite impressed," he said. "Sometimes with changes, an older community can get lost and swallowed up."

HARTSOCK CALLED the Riverview recreation complex, built on top and around the landfill, "a gorgeous complex." Two city-owned golf courses share space with the ski resort.

"It's quite industrial," Hartsock said. "They've done quite a remarkable job, and they're clipping right along."

Riverview recently purchased additional land that will be dredged for a lake.

In addition to generating dumping fees, the landfill also produces natural methane gas, which is sold to energy companies.

Beyond the unique qualities in Riverview, Hartsock said officials there are concerned with industrial plant closings and problems that have eaten at the city's tax base.

Unlike Farmington, Riverview has no downtown area. It is a city divided by Fort Street, a boulevard.

"It's a nice community, but it's different than what most of us living in the northern suburbs would envision," Hartsock added. "I may be biased, but I'm always happy to come back to Farmington."

## on the agenda

Agenda details for government meetings scheduled this week follow. All meetings are open to the public.

**Farmington City Council**  
Council Chambers  
23600 Liberty Street  
8 p.m. Monday, June 1

The city's 1987-88 budget and tax rate are on the agenda for consideration this evening. Also stated for discussion are:

- bid awards for the city's 1987 major street rehabilitation project,
- authorization to purchase a public safety radio console and to renovate the department's dispatch area,
- discussion of the upcoming Rouge River Cleanup,
- a resolution authorizing the collection of a 2-mill property tax within the city's Downtown Development Authority district, and
- several petitions from area merchants and property owners for special sales, sign variances, special permits and a property split on Hawthorne Street.

**Downtown Development Authority**  
Farmington Council Chambers  
23600 Liberty Street  
8 a.m. Tuesday, June 2

Details of upcoming downtown renovation projects will be discussed at this regular meeting of the DDA board.

**Farmington Board of Education**  
Lewis Schulman Administrative Ctr.  
32500 Shilavasee, Farmington  
Tuesday, June 2  
6:45 p.m. — special meeting  
7:30 p.m. — regular meeting

During the regular meeting, trustees are expected to consider the district's auditing contract. Also on the agenda are: the adoption of the district's 1987-88 budget and tax rate, the opening and awarding of bids for doors and a ramp for handicapped people at Harrison High School, and the annual PTA Reflection Awards.

The board will meet in a closed session earlier in the evening to discuss workers' compensation issues.

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