

Harbinger begins
18th season, 1B



North stuns
Chiefs, 1D

Students compete at
creative meet, 8A

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Farmington FOCUS

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LARGE employer. Boatsford General Hospital is Oakland County's 11th largest employer, according to a ranking of full-time employees by Crain's Detroit Business. The Farmington Hills hospital had 1,248 full-time county employees as of January. That's an increase of 15 from the same month last year, according to the Feb. 15 issue of the business publication.

AT long last. Detroit Edison installed the long-awaited, pedestrian-activated traffic signal at Grand River and Grove Street Saturday. The state is responsible for the light.

HELPING hand. Farmington Department of Public Safety officers and WCVZ-FM staff members raised \$900 for cerebral palsy research in a benefit basketball game Friday at Farmington High.

More than 200 spectators turned out on a snowy night to watch the public safety department defeat the radio station, 52-35.

"We were delighted with the turnout," said Frank Lauhoff, public safety director. "The game had already been postponed once because of the weather and it was snowing again Friday night."

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — Residential property assessments are going up in Farmington Hills. They will increase an average 6 percent, with some well below that and others well above, up to 10 percent, said assessor Dean Babb.



Furry friend

Delay Girl Scout Troop 254 at Longacre Elementary in Farmington Hills staged a Teddy Bear Tea Party Monday. That's where each Scout and her teddy bear invite an unregistered 5- or 6-year-old girl and her teddy bear to a special party. The kindergartners sang and danced with their bears and awarded

prizes for best dressed, most huggable and most handsome. The girls snacked on teddy bear goodies and took home teddy bear balloons. A real teddy bear also paid a visit. Above, Mary Latchney is shown with her furry friend. Troop leaders are Liz Betts and Kathy Tosolan.

City cancels review policy on expenses

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

If taxpayers want to find out what Farmington Hills City Council members' on-the-job expenses are, they won't find out at a public meeting.

In an unexpected move Monday, the city council rescinded a policy requiring prior approval of council members' expenses.

The council's four-year-old policy requiring pre-approval conference expense forms often served as a topic for fiery arguments between council members, particularly Joe Alkateeb and former councilwoman Joan Dudley, one of the policy's strongest supporters.

Ironically, Alkateeb, who suggested the policy in August 1984, lobbied for its demise Monday night and won. Discussion of the policy was not on council's formal meeting agenda.

Without the policy, Alkateeb said, council members will file an expense report with the city manager's



Joe Alkateeb
switches positions

office following attendance at conferences. The reports will be reviewed by city financial staff.

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Hills housing boom creates hefty rise in tax assessments

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills residential property owners will pay the price for buying and living in an incredibly healthy housing market.

Residential property assessments are going up again. The average increase is expected to be 12-15 percent, with some assessments increasing as much as 20 percent, Farmington Hills assessor Dean Babb said.

"People should realize that's the average increase. There are going to be a lot of areas where it's not un-

☐ City assessments his industry hardest, 4A

common to see a 20-percent increase in the assessment," Babb said.

"I just hope everyone realizes when they get these assessment notices that the numbers are going to be large. People are going to see changes in assessments of over \$10,000," he said.

Commercial and industrial property owners will not face the same fate. They won't be getting assessment increases this year. Last year,

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Defendant's testimony elicits tears

By Casey Hane
staff writer

☐ Circuit Court jury
is deliberating, 2A

A man accused of murder took the stand on his own behalf last week, crying as he testified about a family crisis that occurred the day his wife died.

James Arnold Edwards, 56, told how his family worked together to build their home on Rhinewood in Farmington Hills, and how he and his now deceased wife, Marlene, shared household duties.

"We were a partnership," Edwards told an Oakland County Circuit Court jury Monday. "Sometimes, she'd mow the lawn . . . sometimes, I'd do the cooking."

Edwards testified he was cooking

a meatloaf, his wife's favorite dinner, on Oct. 14, 1985, the day his house burned and the body of Marlene Edwards was found in the family room, burned beyond recognition. Several months later, Edwards was charged with his wife's murder and setting fire to the house to cover up the crime.

His testimony this week conflicted with that of neighbors, who placed him leaving the scene shortly before the fire.

THE JURY. In Judge Francis X. O'Brien's courtroom, is continuing

its deliberations today.

Edwards testified, detailing the family incident that caused turmoil between the two when his wife came home early from work that day.

"She was very upset, she had a cigarette in her hand," he said. "She got a glass of wine. I tried to calm her down."

The discussion lasted only a few minutes, after which he left her alone in the house to run errands at two area stores, he said. "I said goodbye to my wife as I left," he testified. "That was the last time I saw her." He said he returned about an hour later to find his house on fire, with his wife inside.

Edwards denied prosecution allegations that he cared more for his

possessions than his wife, although on cross examination, he admitted he was concerned about getting the family cars out of the garage during the fire.

"My wife was my first concern, and my house, my property, my children," he said. "I've tried to put this out of my mind, do you understand?"

Edwards testified his wife was having chest pains the Saturday before her death and had "stayed in bed all day Sunday" due to her health.

THE BADLY burned body of 50-year-old Marlene Edwards was discovered in the family room of the Edwards' house, in the southwest sector of the city, on Monday, Oct.

14, 1985, according to prosecution testimony.

Edwards is charged with one count of murder and a second count of arson. A third count of felony murder was dismissed during the trial.

Edwards' defense is that his wife died of natural causes on Oct. 14, dropping a cigarette and causing a smoking fire.

Since the incident, Edwards has moved to West Bloomfield. Retired from computer graphics at Ford Motor Co., he also spends time at a family cottage in Lakeport. His younger daughter has moved to California; his older daughter still lives in the area, family members said.

detector, which was given Tuesday night.

OSTIN SAID THE man had no prior police contacts. "The individual has been entirely cooperative to the entire investigation. It's rare that you will find an individual as helpful."

When asked why the dog tracked to that man's house, Ostin said, "I have no explanation for that. I really, really don't. Nobody knows why and we can't ask the dog."

Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer on Wednesday had not yet ruled out this suspect in the robbery/rape of two women in the same house Nov. 26. "But it ap-

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Personal
Finance



Suspect in rapes cleared by tests

By Dave Varga
staff writer

Birmingham police cleared the prime suspect in the Jan. 26 rape of a Birmingham teenager using scientific tests and a polygraph, which he "passed" conclusively Tuesday night, according to Chief Edward Ostin.

That leaves police in Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills without a specific suspect in the series of nine sexual attacks reported since last April.

"We're back to square one looking for our guy" said Bloomfield Township Youth Officer Philip De-

Donnis.

Some are now saying there is

probably more than one rapist responsible, a possibility many have held all along.

"We believe . . . there is more than one rapist involved," said chief assistant prosecutor Richard Thompson Wednesday. "We are convinced there's more than one involved because of the scientific tests we have done."

Thompson refused to reveal which cases are related or what tests link them, because releasing that information would only assist the rapist.

IF THERE are two rapists, Thompson said they would both fit the same profile — a white man of medium build in his 20s, who is very familiar with the Birming-

ham-Bloomfield area and has above-average intelligence.

Chief Ostin said the former suspect "voluntarily submitted to a scientific examination, the results of which have cleared this individual of any suspicion."

That man, who police identified only as a white male in his early 20s, was found after a Bloomfield Township police tracking dog led officers from the victim's house on Currier Street in Birmingham to his house also in northwest Birmingham.

Hair and blood samples were taken and tested by the Michigan State Police, with results available late last week, Ostin said. The man also volunteered to take the polygraph test, commonly called a lie-