

Shopping around for
bizarre purchases, 1D



Observer
Relays, 1C

Police, fire department
report responses, 6B

Farmington Observer

Volume 99 Number 82

Monday, May 9, 1988

Farmington, Michigan

44 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents

Farmington FOCUS

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Farmington school officials propose to lower the tax rate this year, but booming property values will mean higher tax bills that will increase the district's budget by \$8 million.

If approved as proposed, the Farmington Public Schools operating budget would total \$74 million in the new fiscal year, although the district would levy 30.65 mills — a decrease of 1.15 mills from the previous year, said deputy superintendent Michael Flanagan.

Last year, the district's general fund budget totaled \$65 million.

Despite an apparently positive financial outlook in the coming year, Flanagan warned of future financial strains he expects will be forced on the district. He remains concerned about state equalization issues and the apparent shifting of major money burdens from the state to local districts.

"We're not hiring new people in anticipation of this," Flanagan told

trustees May 3, in highlighting the proposed budget. "It's a very scary situation. (Numbers of) kids going up, the money going down."

Overall enrollments in the district are on the increase, especially at the elementary level, as new residents move into the Farmington area. The district is facing a turnout from 10 years ago, when enrollments were decreasing and revenues were increasing, Flanagan said.

THE DISTRICT will hire only the teachers and staff necessary to meet

student growth demands, and few others, Flanagan said.

These growth demands will include a staff for Highmeadow School this fall, and staffing for a new elementary if voters approve a bond measure this fall.

Some highlights of the budget: • The district's surplus will increase more than 10 percent this year, because Flanagan expects the district to begin paying several million dollars in the employer's share of Social Security taxes. Currently the state pays this for all districts.

• A total of \$776,000 will be spent to set up and staff Highmeadow's common campus program this fall.

• Insurance costs will increase from \$4.5 million to \$6 million, with no improvement in coverage. "This is a major blow to us, in a sense," Flanagan said. "It's money down the drain."

• The district is completing a communications study, and will spend about \$600,000 to buy a new telephone system. Data processing

Please turn to Page 2

Schools' budget up \$8 million

Heart attack kills fire victim

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

An elderly man carried to safety from his burning, second-story Farmington West apartment May 2 died two days later of a heart attack at the University of Michigan Burn Center in Ann Arbor.

William F. Ford, 82, suffered smoke inhalation and second-degree burns over 15 percent of his body in the afternoon fire. His condition had improved from critical to serious by the time he suffered the fatal heart attack at 4 p.m. Wednesday.

He was flown by helicopter to the burn center May 2, shortly after arriving by ambulance at Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills. "He didn't die of a direct injury from the fire but the medical examiner ruled the death was still accidental and related to the fire," said Frank Lauhoff, Farmington Department of Public Safety director. "Both his age and the extent of his injuries contributed to the heart attack."

Kathryn Isard, Ford's neighbor across the hall for six years, remembers him as "rather quiet but a good friend."

"I don't know if he knew too many people here, but I thought he was a nice man," she said.

FORD'S DEATH appears to be the first fire-related death in Farmington, public safety officials said.

Ruled accidental, the fire apparently started in a stuffed sofa in the living room when smoking materials were improperly disposed of. The fire smoldered before filling the apartment with smoke, said Gary Goss, deputy public safety director.

Ford was found unconscious on the floor of his house, and smoke-filled apartment shortly after the fire was reported at 4:30 p.m. Officials said they could not determine exactly when the fire began.

Farmington public safety officers James Madigan and Maria Putt and reserve officer Paul Beale teamed with Farmington Hills emergency medical technicians Kevin Bersche and Denny Hughes in the lifesaving effort at the scene of the fire.

Farmington West, a two-story, brick apartment complex just east of downtown Farmington on the south side of Grand River, houses mostly older, longtime tenants. Some were evacuated until the fire was extinguished.

ISARD SAID she called the fire department after the hallway smoke alarm blared and she saw smoke coming from under the door to Ford's apartment.

She and manager Howard Ringer tried to enter the apartment but they found the door chained. "Then smoke came out and filled our faces," she said. "We couldn't get in but the fire department got here real quick."

Ford retired from linen sales in 1976 after 40 years. Representing the New York City based James G. Hardy Co., he sold linens to hospitals, hotels and clubs.

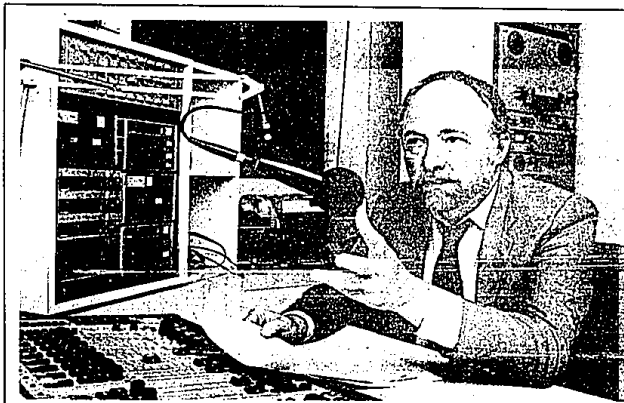
A Farmington resident for about 15 years, he was a voracious reader and a member of the Friends of the Farmington Community Library. He was a regular at the Knights of Columbus Monaghan Council 2690 Lodge in Livonia.

A sports lover, he was a big fan of the Detroit Tigers and the Chicago Cubs.

Ford is survived by two daughters, Patricia Ford Wozniak and Janet Ford Murphy; and six grandchildren.

A rosary will be said at 7:30 p.m. tonight at O'Brien Chapel, 41555 Grand River, Norwell.

Services will be held Tuesday at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Farmington. Burial will be in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Southfield.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Don Watson is at the microphone in the WWJ-AM studio preparing for his midday radio show.

Talk radio lures veteran from consulting to WWJ

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

A couple of years ago, Don Watson left his morning newscaster job at WJR to start his own consulting business.

He should've known better. That hiatus lasted about two years — the longest stretch Watson has been away from a microphone in 27 years.

The Farmington Hills resident is back in the saddle hosting a new program created especially for him in the midday slot on WWJ.

"It's a wonderful business for me and the only business I'm comfortable in," he said. "It's a business I love and know. I had a lot of goals

people

when I began. I've achieved them and now I'm doing what I want to do."

WWJ news director Bob Kizer describes the format as "combining the best elements of talk and news, being interesting but not repetitive."

The show bowed April 4 in the weekday slot from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with the noon hour reserved for news.

Please turn to Page 2

what's inside

Around Farmington . . . 5B
Classifieds . . . Secs. C, E, F
Index . . . 1F
Auto . . . Sections C, F
Real estate . . . 2E
Employment . . . 1F
Crossword puzzle . . . 3E
Entertainment . . . 5D
Obituaries . . . 4B
On the agenda . . . 4B
Police/fire calls . . . 6B
Sports . . . Section C
Street Scene . . . Section D
Taste . . . Section B

We make it
EASY

So easy to place an
ad—just pick up the
phone. We'll do the
rest!

591-0900

Use Your MasterCard or Visa

Community center widens appeal

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The 20-year-old Farmington Community Center is ready for the future with a new name, a change in direction and improving financial health.

"We want to broaden the ways we appeal to people of all ages," center executive director Dorothy Pfaff said. "We need to let more people know this is the place to be."

Just less than a year after it was announced that the center was having financial troubles, center officials are breathing a bit easier with plans for an improved facility and finances and new programming that incorporates the center's five-acre grounds.

Though unofficial, Pfaff expects the center to be renamed Longacre House Community Cultural Center Farmington Hills-Farmington. The new name is designed to promote the community center's transformation to a cultural center.

It also promotes the history of the facility by returning to the original name of the century-old house, once owned by the parents of well-known Farmington Hills resident and naturalist Eleanor Splyer. A final decision on the new name will be made at the center's annual membership meeting May 24.

THE NEW name, a need suggested in an \$18,000 study conducted by

Plante & Moran CPA's, Southfield, also mirrors the perceived need to change the center's image, said Farmington Hills City Councilwoman Jan Dolan, executive board president.

"We don't want to be known as an elitist organization. In some parts of the community, that's what it (the center) is considered," Dolan said. "We want to make the Farmington Community Center a center that's for everyone."

Last week, the executive board accepted Farmington Hills city councilman Ben Marks' collection of \$125,000 in pledges from area business leaders and his promise to work on his one-man fund-raiser at least until he reaches his \$200,000 goal.

The first project to be financed

through the restricted capital fund will be renovation of the amphitheater behind the house, which will be the center of outdoor concerts and plays throughout the summer.

"Transforming the facility into a cultural center through programming and activities and making use of the center's five-acre grounds are high on the priority list."

"Generally, summer was seen as a down-time around here. There has been a perception of 8,000 square feet of building and five acres of land. We're now thinking in terms of five acres of land serving 8,000 square feet of building," Pfaff said.

"With stepped up programming for summer, we're not closing down, we're gearing up," she continued.

The residential requests will be accompanied by letters from Farmington Mayor Richard Tupper and Farmington Hills Mayor Jody Soronen encouraging residents to support the center.

The annual fund-raiser's goal is \$100,000, which will be used for op-

erating costs. Within three weeks, a similar appeal will be made to area businesses. Center officials also will operate a telemarketing campaign reminding those who received letters to support the center.

While the center has had financial problems in the past year, Pfaff said residents and businesses would not be supporting a "linking ship."

"Things are looking brighter. We are not out of the woods yet but we

are getting there," Pfaff said.

WHILE THE business leaders' pledges and cash brought in last week by Farmington Hills city councilman Ben Marks will help improve the century-old facility, it doesn't alleviate the need for continued financial support from the community, Pfaff said.

Please turn to Page 2



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Dorothy Pfaff
executive director

Center looking for money from community

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Beginning today, 26,000 Farmington and Farmington Hills residents will find in their mailboxes a request for financial help from the Farmington Community Center.

"We are encouraging and reminding people this organization is a totally independent nonprofit organization and we rely on the public for

those funds for operating costs, beyond fees and other registrations," executive director Dorothy Pfaff said.

The residential requests will be accompanied by letters from Farmington Mayor Richard Tupper and Farmington Hills Mayor Jody Soronen encouraging residents to support the center.

The annual fund-raiser's goal is \$100,000, which will be used for op-

erating costs. Within three weeks, a similar appeal will be made to area businesses. Center officials also will operate a telemarketing campaign reminding those who received letters to support the center.

While the center has had financial problems in the past year, Pfaff said residents and businesses would not be supporting a "linking ship."

"Things are looking brighter. We are not out of the woods yet but we

are getting there," Pfaff said.

WHILE THE business leaders' pledges and cash brought in last week by Farmington Hills city councilman Ben Marks will help improve the century-old facility, it doesn't alleviate the need for continued financial support from the community, Pfaff said.

Please turn to Page 2