



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

John Donohue sits in the law library at the Farmington Hills law firm of Kohn, Secrest, Wardle, Lynch, Clark and Hampton where he is employed as a municipal attorney. Also a Farmington resident, Donohue is the new city attorney for Farmington.

From news to law

Film changed city attorney's direction

By Casey Hane
staff writer

It started with the Jimmy Stewart movie, "Anatomy of a Murder." Glued to the screen was a young man of 12, who held career aspirations of becoming a journalist.

That movie was the turning point, said John Donohue, now a veteran attorney with a special interest in city government. His interest shifted quickly away from the headlines of news reporting and into the world of law.

He was appointed city attorney for Farmington last month.

"I wanted to be a journalist, but . . . I began learning more about law and that attracted me to it," said the 38-year-old father of two, who also lives in Farmington. "I didn't want to be tied to a desk from nine to five. This did it for me."

Donohue spent the last 12½ years developing his specialty of municipal law, which has landed him solidly in the mainstream of heated zoning issues, commercial and residential development projects and varied road, water and sewer projects.

IT MIGHT sound mundane to the average person, but Donohue finds his work exciting. "Each municipality you deal with has a unique personality," he said.

people

He has also handled cases with notoriety, including the recent debate between the Detroit Pistons and the Pontiac Silverdome over a time conflict with the "Monsters of Rock" concert. He handled the defense for the Silverdome.

Donohue is also city attorney for Walled Lake and general counsel for the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. Currently associated with the Farmington Hills law firm of Kohn, Secrest, Wardle, Lynch, Clark and Hampton, Donohue began his career in 1976 with another Farmington Hills firm, Breanen, Bibeau and Poehlman, after graduating from Wayne State Law School.

"Some people think they want to do criminal law, or plaintiff's work. I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do," he explained.

Learning municipal law was an on-the-job experience.

HE DEVELOPED his legal specialty at the same time he was developing his personal life. Donohue's wife, Nancy Heidi Donohue, is also an

attorney who works as a referee for the Wayne County Friend of the Court. They were married in 1980.

Their routine appears to be one that most working parents face each day: "I get the kids up and out in the morning and she picks them up in the afternoon," he explained.

They have a 5-year-old daughter and a 13-month-old son, who have enhanced their lives, but put a crimp into some of the traveling they love. But John keeps busy with other things. He is a member of Farmington's Downtown Development Authority board, sits on the city's Board of Review and is a director for the Farmington Community Center board. He also sat on the Historic District Commission for Farmington Hills in the early 1980s.

HE GOT to know Farmington as a child coming to visit his uncle, architect John Allen, and cousins who lived here. After graduating from law school, he made the Farmington area his permanent home.

Donohue's Irish name tells only half the story about a man whose mother was French. His family also has a special spot in Oakland County history as one of the founding families.

They arrived in the Union Lake area in the 1850s, where they helped establish St. Patrick Church.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

• ASSAULT CHARGED

A 23-year-old Detroit woman is charged with assault with intent to murder after a man and a woman were struck by a car in the parking of the Farmington Elks Lodge, 23686 Orchard Lake Road, early Wednesday, police said.

The incident stemmed from a boyfriend-girlfriend dispute, police said.

Arraigned before District Judge Michael Hand of Farmington, Sherri Lynette Stempson stood mute to one charge of assault with intent to murder. An innocent plea was entered in her behalf. Cash bond was set at \$50,000 pending a preliminary exam in 47th District Court. Stempson faces up to life in prison if convicted.

A 26-year-old Northville woman and a 24-year-old Detroit man had just left the Elks lodge at 1:30 a.m. when they were intentionally struck by a car in the parking lot. The driver then backed up and struck the woman again, pinning her against a wall, Sgt. Charles Nebus said.

The woman was discharged after treatment at Botsford General Hospital. Farmington Hills, a hospital spokeswoman said.

The man left the scene before po-

lice arrived. The victims knew their assailant. Police found the car in Detroit and impounded it. The suspect later surrendered, Nebus said.

• KOCUR POSTS BOND

Detroit Red Wings forward Joe Kocur, 23, turned himself in on an outstanding warrant charging him with assault and battery in connection with an argument and an alleged arm punching incident that involved a 22-year-old woman outside a Farmington Hills dance spot Aug. 23.

The West Bloomfield resident turned himself in to Farmington Hills police at 4 p.m. Thursday, after returning from a pre-season road trip. He was released on \$100 cash bond. He is scheduled to be arraigned Oct. 24 in 47th District Court, Farmington, Sgt. Charles Nebus said.

The argument and incident in which Kocur allegedly punched the Farmington Hills woman's arm took place in the parking lot of Mr. Sports, 30860 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, police said.

Kocur faces up to 90 days in jail and a \$500 fine if convicted on the misdemeanor charge. He denies the charge and intends to plead innocent, according to his attorney, Al Addis of Troy.

• BIKES RECOVERED

Three bicycles stolen from the rack outside Kenbrook Elementary School, 32130 Bonnet Hill, were recovered when three juvenile suspects were arrested near Orchard Lake Road and Barlow Sept. 29.

The bikes, reported stolen at 2 p.m., were recovered at 5 p.m. when an officer spotted them being ridden by two 13-year-old boys and one 12-year-old boy.

The boys, who live at the Sarah Fisher Home for Children, had left O.E. Dunckel Middle School, 32800 12 Mile, without permission at 10:30 a.m., according to a Farmington Hills police report.

• BREAK-INS REPORTED

Cash was reported stolen in break-ins at K&C Cleaners, 21023 Farmington, and Hungry Howie's, 21019 Farmington, Sept. 28-29. Attempted break-ins were reported at three nearby businesses, according to Farmington Hills police reports.

Jewelry valued at \$5,400 was reported stolen from two units in a building on the 37000 block of Jefferson at Independence Green Apartments Sept. 27-28. An attempted break-in was reported in a third unit, according to Farmington Hills police reports.

• THEFTS REPORTED

Video equipment valued at \$2,174 was reported stolen from Liberty Business Systems, Sept. 3-5.

Tools valued at \$1,000 were reported stolen from a storage area at Chatham Hills Apartments Sept. 24-28.

A piggy bank with less \$1 was stolen from a house on Grand River during a break-in Sept. 24-28. A wallet, cash and a gold bracelet valued at \$238 were stolen from the back room of the student store at Farmington High School Sept. 26.

Four tires and two bikes valued at \$1,850 were reported stolen from a carport at Indian Creek Apartments Sept. 25-28.

A 1987 Chevrolet Monte Carlo valued at \$10,500 was reported stolen from Botsford General Hospital, 28650 Grand River, Sept. 27-29.

69th House hopefuls debate

The two candidates for the 69th state House district seat will debate at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 5, at Farmington Hills City Hall, 31555 12 Mile.

Republican Jan Dolan and Democrat John Dolan will be questioned by panelists Jim Labadie, WDET radio news editor; Dr. Lisa Schwartz, University of Detroit political science professor; and Bob Sklar, Farmington Observer editor.

Under the League of Women Voters of the West Bloomfield-Farmington Area format, each candidate will make a two-minute opening statement.

Questions from the panelists will follow. Each candidate will have 1 minute to respond.

Questions from the audience also will be asked by the moderator. The program will end with a two-minute closing statement by each candidate.

Metrovision Channel 12 will cablecast the one-hour debate at the following times:

- Oct. 17, 8 p.m.
- Oct. 20, 8 p.m.
- Oct. 24, 8 p.m.
- Nov. 3, 8 p.m.
- Nov. 7, 2 and 8 p.m.

\$1.7 million may be added to FHS expansion project

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Superintendent Graham Lewis called it an "opportunity" time to do the additional improvements. "This is one of these situations we have to face squarely," he said. "I think we have to approach the situation and deal with it. It's opportunity."

AS TRUSTEES consider additions to the project, plans for the school's media center are well under way. Projected completion date for the center is September of 1989, according to district architect Ron Aten.

The new center will double the space of the current library from 5,000 square feet to 12,000 square feet cutting into a courtyard at the center of the school for the addi-

tional space. The number of books will rise from 12,000 volumes to a potential space for 20,000.

It will remain as a focal point at the center of the school, where it can be seen as visitors come in the front entrance.

THE REVAMPED center will also include a classroom specifically for using media equipment that will handle up to 60 students, a reading room with computer access station, and two entrances.

According to Aten, the district expects to give final approval to construction documents and go out for bid in December, and open and award bids in January. Plans call for completing the extended wing of the center by next June and the renova-

tions by September.

Peggy Schmidt, newly appointed director of media resources for the district, called the media center project exciting.

"I'm excited about the potential not only for the school, but for the district. Keep in mind, we are building this and renovating this for the future," she said.

In looking around the school's media center last week, Farmington High principal Jerry Potter called the planned upgrade "a dream come true."

The Building and Site Committee of the board will discuss the matter further Tuesday at 6:30 p.m., and the full board is slated to vote on the issue at the regular 7:30 p.m. meeting following.

3 students get tuition break

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THE FAMILIES of Farmington High School student Christine Hunt, her brother John, and Power Middle School student Jason Livernois will be charged \$400 for elementary \$660 for secondary school tuition if their permanent transfer is not approved by Oakland Schools by the end of the school year.

Under a board policy, the district charges \$800 per year for elementary students and \$1,320 for secondary students who live outside of the district.

The Sept. 12 Observer reported that no tuition amount was listed in the motion. Parents also insisted that the board did not address tuition during the initial discussion.

But approved minutes of the board from Sept. 6 said the students could attend for a one-year grace period "on a tuition basis."

"We were under the impression there would be no tuition," said Carol Colby, mother of Christine Hunt. "These kids have been going to these schools all their lives — they didn't make this mistake."

"That was the main concern, that they (the students)

get back to school. There was no tuition amount," added William Livernois, Jason's father. "There was never a dollar figure mentioned. We walked out of here not knowing what the dollar figure would be."

Superintendent Graham Lewis restated his position on tuition, saying he felt the full amount should be due. "Our position is, as a non-resident, you are a guest in the district and must pay tuition," he said.

FLANDERS ELEMENTARY principal Frank Delawsky said he was upset with the out-of-district students being allowed, because his school is already overcrowded.

"It is disconcerting to me," he said. "There are letters about the overcrowding at Flanders School. Here we have overcrowded classrooms — it's a morale problem."

The residents' petitions to Oakland Schools could take up to two years, depending on whether it is approved or Clarencville schools appeals the decision, said Farmington trustee Helen Pritow, who also sits on the OSD board. Parent Carol Colby said she is circulating the petitions.



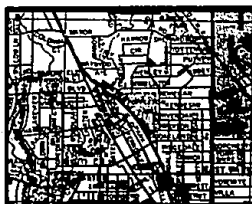
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