

Los Flamencos here
for concert, 1B



Swimming
results, 1D

School enrollment
shows decline, 2A

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HE'S not declared his
candidate for the
47th District Court
seat that'll open
when Judge Michael Hand
retires in two years.

But Oakland County
commissioner Jack McDonald,
R-Farmington Hills, is
considering running. "It's two
years away. Who knows what's
going to happen. But I'm not
foreclosing it."

McDonald, 46, finished
second to Chief Assistant
Prosecutor Richard Thompson
in the Aug. 2 primary race for
the Republican nomination for
prosecuting attorney. His 14-
year service on the county
commission ends Jan. 1.

A former Oakland County
assistant prosecutor, McDonald
sees a run for a district court
judgeship less exhausting than
for a countywide post. "It's a
lot smaller district. Running for
a countywide seat was a bear. I
found that out. I never realized
how big this county is."

An attorney since 1970,
McDonald has practiced
criminal and civil law. The two-
judge 47th District Court
covers Farmington and
Farmington Hills.

QUOTE of the week

“If we're not where the
poor are, where are we? If
we're not providing food,
transportation and clothing,
what are we doing?
”

— The Rev. James Wright, of St.
Alexander Catholic Church in
Farmington Hills, who opposes
the planned closing of 43 Detroit
parishes (see story on this page).

what's inside

Around Farmington . . . 1B
Business . . . 1C
Cable connection . . . 12C
Classifieds . . . C,E,F,G,H
Index . . . 9G
Auto . . . Soc. H
Real estate . . . 2E
Employment . . . G,H
Creative living . . . 1E
Crossword puzzle . . . 9C
Entertainment . . . 5C-9C
Obituaries . . . 6D
Opinion . . . 14A
Points of view . . . 15A
Police/fire calls . . . 6A
Road watch . . . 14C
Sports . . . 1D

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**WAYNE COUNTY
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Winter vote eyed for new school

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Farmington school trustees will
go back to voters this winter asking
for bond money to build a new west-
side elementary school. They cited a
preference Tuesday for holding the
special election in January or "as
soon as possible."

This is the second bond issue try,
following the Sept. 19 defeat of a
\$27.25-million proposal, which in-
cluded the new school as well as \$20
million for districtwide renovations
and safety measures. Trustees say
they have not given up on the dis-
trictwide projects, but will make the

new school a top priority.

No new price tag was placed on
the project, but Superintendent
Graham Lewis called the new school
the most important project for the
district. The bond issue in September
would have earmarked \$7 million
for the new facility.

"If I had to go back on one aspect,
it would be the renovations," Lewis
said. "The school is the centerpiece.
The school is a must."

Trustees also promised to use cur-
rent operating money, plus dipping
into fund equity, or cash reserves, to
handle any immediate safety con-
cerns. These include asbestos remov-
al, mandated by the federal govern-

ment, and replacing older light bal-
lasts throughout the district
containing polychlorinated biphenyls
— also known as PCBs.

TRUSTEE SUSAN Rennels re-
quested a timetable for replacing old
ballasts, written school district poli-
cies on how to handle incidents of
PCB leakage when it occurs, and
better communication with parents
on these issues.

Rennels also suggested the early
winter vote for a new school, so the
local proposal does not conflict with
a possible statewide ballot proposal
on school finance reform which may
occur in March.

"I'm concerned that ours will be
whiplashed — ground into the dust
with that (state proposal)," she said.
"I don't want to see it get caught."

Board treasurer Jack Inch called
the new school issue "critical" and
suggested the board focus its atten-
tion there. "I want to keep the issue
clear," he said. "The other issues
will contaminate it."

Inch said he preferred waiting un-
til after this bond issue, and any vote
for school finance reform, before de-
ciding whether to hold another bond
election for renovation projects.

ALTHOUGH THE bond issue deci-
sion was approved unanimously by

the school board, all trustees were
not totally satisfied with the out-
come. At least three supported an
earlier motion — which was defeat-
ed — suggesting the district go back
to voters for the full amount in two
ballot questions. The original propos-
al asked for the full \$27.25 million in
one question.

"I was in favor of the bond issue
as it was," said trustee Janice Rol-
nick. "I will vote to go with the new
school, but I certainly won't forget
about the rest of it. I think it's a ma-
jor priority."

Please turn to Page 4



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

The Rev. James Wright at St. Alexander in Farmington Hills believes the Catholic church's role has been compromised by the
pending church building closings in Detroit.

Pastor is trying to help area churches

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

The Catholic church should be
reaching out to Detroit's poor peo-
ple, not deserting them.

So says the Rev. James Wright,
pastor at St. Alexander in Farmington
Hills.

A Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alli-
ance member, Wright reminds that
the Catholic church's foundation and
growth have their roots among the
poor.

"In today's world," he said,
"Christianity is experiencing its
greatest growth among poor people
in Latin and South America and Af-
rica."

"I don't see how deserting talented
and dedicated people who work in
the city is going to help the church
grow in Detroit."

The pastoral alliance is a group of
Detroit ministers and supporters
dedicated to preserving churches
within the city. The 60-plus members

Please turn to Page 4

Tighter gas-oil drilling laws eyed

Related editorial, 14A

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills city officials be-
lieve they can regulate, but not
prohibit, natural gas and oil drilling.
But there's still uncertainty whether
the city is adequately protected by
its ordinances.

"These are some of the things the
staff is struggling with," city attor-
ney Paul Bibeau said.

In its first official response to resi-
dents' concerns about mineral rights
leases in southwest Farmington
Hills, council members agreed to op-
pose "the idea, the concept of gas
and oil drilling" in the city. Their op-

position will be in writing in a letter
to residents in the targeted gas and
oil exploration areas.

"We wish to maintain the environ-
ment in the current character of our
community," councilman Terry
Sever said.

The council also is expected to
adopt a resolution within several
weeks "in general, opposing the per-
mitting of gas and oil drilling in or
close to an urban area," city man-
ager William Costick said.

The letter to southwest Farmington
Hills residents will include data
buttressing city officials' position
that they can regulate, if not prohib-
it, gas and oil drilling, particularly
in residential areas.

Please turn to Page 4



William Costick

Oil symposium planned

The search for answers about nat-
ural gas and oil exploration will con-
tinue with a symposium featuring in-
dustry experts, state Department of
Natural Resources representatives,
homeowners associations and city
officials at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 1.

Hosted by the Council of Home-
owners Associations of Farmington
Hills, the symposium will be in the
auditorium of the Farmington Com-
munity Library, Hills branch, 32737
12 Mile.

"What we're lacking here is joined
voices in one room so we all know
what's going on. We are trying to get
a response . . . we are trying to get
a group of people together to hear a
case and a plea from one side and

then another," said homeowners
council president Jack Rajkovich.

The symposium is scheduled in re-
sponse to residents' questions and
confusion over at least two compa-
nies seeking mineral rights leases
from homeowners in southwest
Farmington Hills.

Originally, representatives from
the two companies, the Lansing-
based Energy Quest, Inc., and Ma-
rine City-based M.J. O'Connor & As-
sociates, were expected at the sym-
posium. But Rajkovich was informed
this week that Energy Quest presi-
dent Bob Mitchell will not attend.
Mitchell told Rajkovich the company
is no longer concentrating on Farmington
Hills.

Ordinance on artwork

Pending law could force sculpture's removal

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The controversial Michael Hall
sculpture "Corvington 1972" in front
of a Northwestern Highway office
building, will be a memory if a pro-
posed art work ordinance is adopted
by the Farmington Hills City Council.

The proposed ordinance was
unveiled Monday at a joint study ses-
sion of the city council and planning
commission. It still faces public
hearings before the planning com-
mission and city council.

The proposed ordinance provides
categories "broad enough in latitude
to give the planning commission
enough room for judgment so they
wouldn't give approval to something
deleterious to the community," city
attorney Dick Poehlman said.

"We don't want to leave art work
to the imagination."

The Corvington sculpture would be
in violation of the proposed ordi-
nance because it sits within the office
building's front-yard setback.
Farmington Hills code enforcement
supervisor Lee Blizman said.

The sculpture — admired by

some, considered ugly by others —
came under scrutiny in early sum-
mer when Gilbert Silverman, in-
ternationally known arts collector, was
ordered to remove it from the front
of the office building. The building
houses his offices of Holtzman and
Silverman, 30833 Northwestern
Highway.

Silverman, who owns the sculp-
ture, was unavailable for comment.

THE FARMINGTON HILLS Zoning
Board of Appeals denied Silverman
a variance to maintain the sculpture
primarily because the city has no

provision in its building code for a
work of art. The ZBA also voted
against it because its location on the
building's front lawn violates city
front-yard setback requirements.

Whether the proposed ordinance
is adopted in its current form is uncer-
tain. Both planning commissioners
and council members questioned
some of the provisions.

In particular, skepticism loomed
about the ordinance's criterion that
an acceptable structure must be de-
signed by a recognized artist. The or-
dinance does not provide a specific
definition for recognized artist.

Council members appeared un-
easy with the criterion, citing the
possibility of an unrecognized high
school artist as capable of designing
a sculpture worthy of public display.

OPINIONS WERE mixed on how
the ordinance should cover sculp-
tures of questionable taste.

With the help of the Farmington
Hills Arts Commission, a sculpture
would have to be determined not
to be offensive "to the sensitivities of
the community." Planning commis-

Please turn to Page 2