

Public safety department changes

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Farmington's public safety department was reorganized this month — the first such shift within the police and fire agency under director Frank Lauff.

Changes involve the department's detective bureau, fire marshal's office and shift commanders, Lauff said. They are expected to offer more efficient and better service to the city of 12,000 people.

"The depth is what the department is pleased about," said Lauff, who is in his fifth year as the department's director. "I see it as a real step forward. This is the first time I've had a chance to do this."

"Change is good," he added. "That way people don't get stagnant. You need to keep people well-rounded."

Planned for the past nine months, the restructuring also comes at a time when the department is working at full force, with 23 sworn officers inside and on the road, seven dispatchers and records employees,

and two permanent part-time employees. A public safety reserve staff of 17 is also trained and in place to help with both police and fire calls.

THE RESTRUCTURING was effective Oct. 24, with the quarterly "changing of the guard," when shift changes occurred for many officers and dispatchers, who rotate throughout the year between three shifts: days, afternoons and midnight. The change was accomplished by adding new officers instead of replacing, at the same rank, Commander Peter Amato, who resigned earlier this year.

Major players in the restructuring include: Commander Chuck Lee, who will act as a new "special operations commander;" Public Safety Officer Joe Schornack, who is the city's new fire marshal; and public safety officers Dan Dellar and Dan Potter, who will work in the detective bureau.

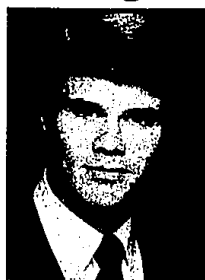
Lee will supervise the fire and detective operations, plus continue with his regular role in community Neighborhood Watch and Business

Watch programs. He will also be responsible for all department training, Lauff said.

Schornack, who has degrees in both criminal justice and fire science, will become more involved with fire inspections, pre-planning for hazardous chemical incidents and fire-related training. "He has shown himself to be very competent in the fire field," Lauff said. The change was made "mainly because of his interest."

EMPHASIZING FIRE training and safety is important, according to Lauff. "I see it as a real need. Fires occur more frequently than a deadly force situation," he said. "The main concern is the individual safety and the public safety."

Although an emphasis is being placed on fires, regular road patrols have also been strengthened by the changes. Schornack replaces Commander Michael Wiggins, who has turned to supervise a regular shift. Also returning to shift command is Commander John Coyle, who worked most recently in the detec-



Frank Lauff
public safety director

tive bureau.

Wiggins maintains his fire inspector status, which will add more depth to the force as well, Lauff said.

Lauff expects "settling in" time for the reorganization to be about six months.

Gas and oil meeting is Tuesday

Residents are invited to a symposium on natural gas and oil exploration at 7:30 Tuesday at the Farmington Community Library, Hills branch, 32737 12 Mile.

Hosted by the Council of Homeowners Association of Farmington Hills, the symposium will feature Farmington Hills city manager William Costick; Michael O'Connor of M.J. O'Connor & Associates; Robert Mitchell, Energy Quest Inc.; and resident Peggy DuPont, a homeowners council committee chairwoman.

O'Connor and Mitchell are with companies that have been seeking mineral rights leases from residents in southwest Farmington Hills.

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School board looks at January for \$7.3 million bond election

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Farmington school officials will ask for an estimated \$7.3 million for a new elementary school, as they return to voters this winter for a second time.

They are aiming for a Tuesday, Jan. 31, 1989, special bond election, so a school could be built on district-owned land on 11 Mile, east of Halsted, and opened as early as 1990.

The ballot will not include language for a separate early childhood center.

The school board also authorized \$50,000 to \$50,000 last week to begin site planning for the 11-acre parcel, because of the tight timeline facing the district for the proposed school.

If approved by voters, the preliminary work would allow the district to open the school by fall of 1990. Without the work, a new school could not open until fall of 1991.

A \$77.25 million bond issue was defeated by voters in September, which would have given the district \$5 million for the new elementary and additional money for renovation and safety concerns in school buildings.

THE JANUARY issue would ask only for the school; the proposed dol-

lar amount has been increased to cover inflation factors in construction.

"To build a quality school on that site . . . will be very difficult — if not impossible — to complete by the fall of 1990, given a blank sheet of paper in February," said Sandy Stevenson, senior vice president for Greiner Inc., a Grand Rapids architectural firm, which will design a new school if voters approve it.

Trustees gave a unanimous go-ahead Oct. 18 on planning for the election.

Deputy superintendent Michael Flanagan said he would return to the board Dec. 6 when they would be asked to officially set the election date. In the meantime, proposed ballot language must be approved by the state Department of Education.

Despite the unanimous vote, there was some discussion about spending the \$50,000 to \$50,000 on preliminary planning. Some trustees were

concerned it might appear the board was circumventing the September vote, even though they feel the work is necessary.

TRUSTEE JANICE Rolnick called it a "\$60,000 gamble."

"I think that we are suggesting we have a priority . . . to get that school open," said trustee Jack Inch. "I agree this is a gamble. But it's a gamble we have to have."

"It's an absolute necessity if we're going to open it. It's a bitter pill to take, and I don't like it. But it's a necessity."

If the election cannot be approved for January, the district will have to wait until June, because of conflicts with a statewide referendum on school finance reform expected to come before voters in March.

Waiting until June would delay the building opening until 1991, Flanagan said.



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clarification

In the bottom group photo on Page 4 of today's special section honoring the Observer's 100th anniversary, the name of Anna Cook, wife of Fred

Cook, who ran Cook Drygoods on Grand River at the turn of the century, is misspelled.

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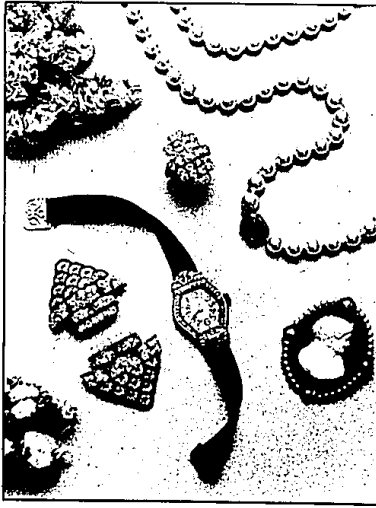
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