

When Saturday night was 'Ghoul-ish,' 1D



Regional results, 1C

Area hearts go out to the homeless, 3A

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THE great experiment is over. Farmington Hills Mayor Terry Sever won't float the "Public Questions and Comments" part of the city council agenda. On the second and fourth Mondays of the month, it'll appear where it always has, near the top of the agenda. On public hearing night the third Monday of the month, it will follow the hearings. A stronger effort will be made to keep public hearings to public hearing night. "That seems the fairest way to treat the item," Sever said. He stressed that the three-minute time limit per speaker will be enforced. After each speaker, he'll respond if appropriate or defer the question or comment to the city manager for a report or a recommendation. On a lighter note, he said he'll grant a 15-second extension to anyone who has something positive to say. "I want to encourage people to find something nice to say," he said.

Memory lane

50 years ago:
• At the township's spring election, voters will be allowed to decide whether the township should raise \$18,000 as its share of a \$35,000 township hall. A WPA grant would cover the rest.
• Teachers in the Farmington school system have no way of knowing whether or not they are doing satisfactory work until they have been fired or demoted, and they deserve more security than this, school board president Spencer J. Heeney said in a statement issued to the Enterprise.
— Farmington Enterprise, Feb. 23, 1939

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Reminder
Your Observer Carrier will be stopping by this week to collect for the month. Please have the money ready and be sure to get your receipt. It's worth a \$2.00 discount on the next classified advertisement you place in your hometown newspaper.

Planners reject Muirwood rezoning



Architect Leonard Siegal of Siegal/Tuomala Associates describes proposed expansion plans for Muirwood Square at the Farmington Hills Planning Commission meeting Thursday.

Planners comment on downtown Farmington, 4A

By Casey Hans
staff writer

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission will recommend against rezoning property that would allow a multimillion dollar expansion of the Muirwood Square shopping center to 105,000 square feet — about twice its current size. The center's owner, Farmington Hills-based Bertak Building Co., also announced Thursday it has secured an anchor grocery for the proposed expansion at Drake and Grand River, the Shopping Center Market, which has a store at 15 Mile and Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield. The commission's 5-3 vote Thursday against the rezoning came after city planning consultant Claude Coates recommended it, saying it would "not be a significant change" to the city's master plan. A rezoning of the property would not exactly follow the city's Master Plan, which calls for residential in the area. The issue now goes to the Farmington Hills City Council, where it will likely be debated in March. The council will make a final decision on rezoning for the project, which sits at the Farmington/Farmington Hills border and has caused concern in the neighboring, smaller city of Farmington. REPRESENTATIVES OF the Chatham Hills subdivision in Farmington, and the Independence Commons and Independence Hills subdivisions in Farmington Hills opposed the rezoning, citing traffic congestion as a major reason.

Representatives of the Farmington Planning Commission and the Farmington Downtown Development Authority also spoke out against the project as they did last week, because of possible detrimental effects to the smaller city's downtown business district at Grand River and Farmington roads. "If something else goes in, I'm going to go out," added Michael Stocker, owner of Stocker's Market in nearby Farmington, and one of several merchants speaking against the project.

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How they voted

The motion was to recommend rezoning property west of Muirwood Square from residential to commercial and parking, which would allow an expansion of the shopping center. The motion was called a "reasonable alternative" to the city's master land use plan. Commissioner Jeri VanHouten was absent.

- Voting "yes":
- Joanne Smith: "To add this small amount to our commercial area does not do anything drastic to our master plan."
 - Paul Bitzman: "It makes sense for the city of Farmington Hills to support the rezoning."

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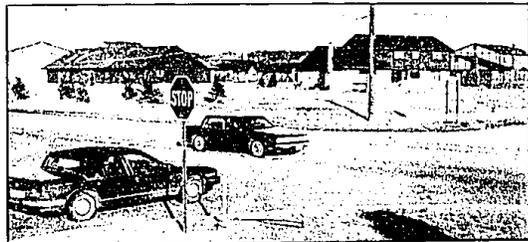
Could traffic signal have saved girl?

By Judith Doner Berne and Carolyn DeMerco
staff writers

Too late for 10-year-old Holly Powl, the intersection of 14 Mile and Drake roads at the borders of Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield will get a traffic light. Installation is planned by early summer, but there is a clear question of whether it could have happened before last Tuesday's accident in which Holly died. Farmington Hills proposed the signal at the intersection over a year ago. A traffic study showed growing traffic, particularly in rush hours, and the accident data met the requirements, said assistant city manager David Call. "We would have installed it earlier but (the road commission) wanted the section paved," Call said, referring to the north leg of Drake which lies within West Bloomfield Township. Drake is paved south from 14 Mile.

THAT WAS CONTRADICTED Friday by road commission spokesman John Joy, who said installing the light has nothing to do with the paving. In response, Call cited a May 11, 1987 letter from Winston J. Myrie, of the road commission's traffic safety division, which said "If these paving projects should increase the traffic demand to warrant signals at Halstead and 14 Mile Road and at Drake and 14 Mile Road, it will be necessary that the north and south legs of these intersections have matching cross-sections before traffic signals can be installed." To meet that demand took longer, requiring a financial agreement among Farmington Hills, Oakland County and the road commission to pay for the road. Farmington Hills, a city has control of its roads. West Bloomfield, a township, must rely on the road commission.

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The intersection at Drake and 14 Mile roads on the West Bloomfield/Farmington Hills border has been the site of two traffic fatalities in a little over a year — the latest one last week.

County awaits chance to arrest Ohio rapist



Steven A. Szeman Jr. 'I want to apologize'

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer
It will be at least 30-60 days before the man accused of being Oakland County's serial rapist returns to Michigan from Ohio where he was sentenced Friday to 58-140 years in prison for rape, robbery and assault. Steven A. Szeman Jr., 25, the former West Bloomfield resident accused of being the ski-masked rapist, must be placed in a permanent Ohio correctional facility before he can be formally notified to return to Michigan to face charges, Oakland County assistant prosecutor John Slevin said.

"He has 30 days to decide whether he will fight it (retainer proceeding). If he waives it, an officer (will) serve arrest warrants and bring him back," Slevin said. If Szeman fights detainer proceedings, Oakland County investigators must prove to Ohio authorities they have valid arrest warrants against Szeman. Before a media crush Friday afternoon, Judge James J. McMonagle of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas in the Cleveland Justice Center sentenced Szeman to 10-25 years for each of four counts of rape, 10-25 years for one count of aggravated robbery and 8-15 years for

one count of felonious assault. Sentences will run consecutively. The Rocky River, Ohio, resident pleaded guilty Jan. 4 to the charges in connection with the rape of a 24-year-old woman in her parents' home in North Olmsted, Ohio, Nov. 10. After breaking into the house and raping the woman repeatedly, the ski-masked, knife-wielding rapist gathered things to steal. That allowed his victim to run outside and pound on a door for help. He chased her but ran away when people came to her aid. The suspect, Szeman, was cornered in a yard of a house in a business district and held for police.

AT HIS sentencing, Szeman, with tear-filled eyes, said, "I want to apologize for all the hurt I've caused the victim and others," according to a Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas spokesman. Szeman's attorney, James Burke of Fairview Park, Ohio, could not be reached for comment. Szeman will remain in the Cuyahoga County Jail until his transfer to the Chillicothe Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison near Columbus. Szeman's parole eligibility will be determined by the

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Hills assessment hikes average 10%

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The housing market is stabilizing but Farmington Hills residential property assessments will continue to feel the effects of booming sales in 1987-88. Farmington Hills residential property tax assessments are expected to increase an average 10 percent this year, with some areas increasing as much as 15-20 percent. "We're still catching up to the 1987 sales market. We've been using a 24-month sales study that's allowed us to spread that rapid increase in

sales over a longer period of time," Farmington Hills assessor Dean Babb said. "While assessments are still increasing, overall they aren't as bad as they were last year." In 1988, residential property assessments increased an average 12-15 percent, with some increasing as high as 20 percent. Residential property assessments must be increased at least 10 percent or the Oakland County Equalization Division will apply a factor. "We're trying to move no more than the county requires because of the slowdown, stabilization in the market," Babb said. Some significant increases of anywhere from

50-100 percent will be seen in vacant residential property, particularly in newer subdivisions. "Our studies indicate our assessments were very, very low," Babb said. NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY will fare a little better. Industrial property owners can expect an average 5-percent increase. Commercial property owners will face an average 3-percent increase, with some receiving no increase and others receiving as much as a 10-percent increase.



Dean Babb Hills assessor

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