

# Judge candidates lining up

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

As expected, Judge Michael Hand's announced retirement has opened the floodgate for rumors about which attorney seeking the vacant seat will receive a favorable nod from Gov. James Blanchard.

The governor has the task of appointing an interim judge when Hand, 70, officially retires May 1. The interim judge will finish the 1 1/2 years of Hand's unexpired term and will take the bench until the November 1990 general election.

A spokeswoman for Blanchard's personnel office said Thursday that applications for the appointment were already on her desk and many more are expected. Names were not released.

Though the district court seat is nonpartisan, the appointment is expected to be political from the Democratic ranks by a Democratic governor.

That's a notion former Oakland County Commissioner Jack McDonald, a Farmington Hills Republican, is keeping in mind as one who's interested in the seat. "I am very interested. But I don't think I've got a snowball's chance in hell. It's strictly political," he said.

McDonald last year made an un-

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successful bid for Oakland County prosecutor.

WHILE THE rumor mill spins, only several have publicly stated their intentions to seek the appointment. Others' names have cropped up, but attorneys were unavailable to confirm their interest.

In addition to former Oakland County assistant prosecutor McDonald, Wayne County assistant prosecutor Martin Krohner and Workers Compensation Magistrate Gerald Freedman, both Farmington Hills residents, are writing their letters to the governor.

"I was going to run for the seat. I was going to be one of the many people who would be interested in running," said Krohner, 44, vice chairman of the Council of Homeowners

Associations of Farmington Hills.

Like other candidates and judicial watchers, Krohner expects the appointment field and election date in November to be large and hard-fighting.

Krohner is one of the founders and first presidents of the Oakland County Mothers Against Drunk Driving chapters and a co-founder and legal advisor for the state organization. He believes he's got what it takes to be a district judge.

"I've got what is judicial temperament. I have a working knowledge of the law. I know when people come into court, they want to be treated fairly and respectfully. I possess these qualities," Krohner said. "People want a fair, honest and hard-working judge. That's me."

FREEDMAN, 56, is a 30-year resident of Farmington Hills and in his second year as a magistrate on the Workers Compensation Board of Magistrates. Blanchard appointed Freedman to the post.

Before that, he was in private practice, with experience in criminal and civil cases. Freedman also served as a circuit and district court mediator as well as a divorce mediator in Oakland County. When the district court system was established in the late 1960s, he served with the Oakland County Bar Association to select district court mediators.

Freedman also was a special attorney for the state's Uninsured Motorist Fund. He is a past member and officer of the Farmington Democratic Club and vice chairman of the 18th District Democratic Party.

Freedman believes he has the qualifications it takes to be a district judge. He made an unsuccessful bid against 47th District Judge Margaret Schaeffer when she first won the seat in November 1974.

"I have two years equivalent to a district judge (as workers compensation magistrate). I have the temperament to be a good judge. I always thought I could be a good judge. But you never know until you do it," Freedman said.



## White Cane Week

Farmington Area Lions Club member Jack Kavliank (left), Farmington Hills Mayor Terry Sover and Ed Mosshammer of the Farmington Community Lions Club promote White Cane Week, April 28 to May 5. Lions club members will sell white canes to raise money for programs that help the sight or hearing impaired, as well as other charitable groups. The Lions pay for eyeglasses for any Farmington or Farmington Hills resident who can't afford them. To join the morning or evening Lions clubs, open to men and women, call Kavliank: 553-4850.

# 'Big frog' leaving 'small pond'

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flow 47th District Judge Margaret Schaeffer said selection is generally left to the lower court.

"I wish Judge Hand well in his re-

irement," Schaeffer said. "He has a wonderful family and he and (his wife) Elaine will enjoy the opportunity retirement gives to visit and travel."

Running for election has never been really tough for Hand. He's never lost an election, which he claims is just pure luck. "When I first ran, no one thought I would win, including my wife," said the father of six and grandfather of nine.

His one bit of advice for his successor is simple: "All you can do is your homework — and be as conscientious as you can."

But Hand also believes the judicial system could go a long way in regaining public trust if judges would develop a rapport with the public. "Judges should be down to earth. Judges put their trousers on one leg at a time just as everyone else does," he said.

five years, using the Farmington City Council chambers as his court.

Hand leaves the bench with years of memories. The greatest change he has witnessed is an increase in drug use. But he also recalls cases that have turned him inside out. "The ones you remember are the ones you'd like to forget," he said.

Two incidents come to mind.

The recent murder case involving former Farmington Hills resident Jon Vermuelen, convicted of shooting his wife to death, struck a chord. "That was a brutal, brutal case," Hand said.

Another was some years ago. An 11-year-old girl was kidnapped, raped, sodomized and murdered. "The details on that would turn your stomach," Hand said.

But over the years, Hand has learned when to turn off his work. "You have to leave it on the desk," he said. "You can't take your troubles home or you wouldn't be able to sleep."

HAND ADMITTED that he's not been unlike many lawyers who see themselves edging up the judicial ladder.

"I had an inkling for it," he said. "I've submitted my name several times for circuit court and court of appeals. I was considered but didn't get it."

"That's OK. When I think about it, that's 20 miles up and 20 miles down (to Oakland County Circuit Court, Pontiac). The pay's not that much more and there's a hell of a lot more headaches."

The one-time aspiring pre-medicine student and journalist considers his career a success.

He has served as a visiting judge in Detroit, as recently as last year and, notably, after the 1967 Detroit riots.

He has spread his legal knowledge teaching at the Institute for Continuing Legal Education and the Michigan Judicial Institute. "It keeps you sharp," Hand said.

**Farmington Observer**  
(USPS 167-840)

Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Economic Newspapers, 2225 Bowers, Birmingham 48017. Second-class postage paid at Birmingham, MI 48012. Address all mail (subscription, change of address, Form 3589) to P.O. Box 591-0556, Livonia, MI 48151. Telephone 591-0556.

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## Teachers pink-slipped

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Special services programs are especially affected this year. Declining enrollment in countywide special education center programs, decentralization of the autistic and early intervention programs and changes in the on-campus program at Boys Republic all had an impact on staffing requirements, according to special education supervisor Jan Richards.

Also having an impact this year are many teachers at Highmeadow Common Campus, who are new to the district. "It would appear most of these teachers are going to be laid off," said Trustee Helen Ditzhazy, who has heard from many of these parents while campaigning for reelection.

TWO HIGHMEADOW parents, Bruce Fay and Jennifer Mart, had wanted to speak before the board on the layoff issue Tuesday, but were refused by board President Jack Cotton, who said "there's nothing we can do." Mart, a teacher in another district, said she understood that approval of the list was necessary, but wanted to voice her support for the Highmeadow teachers.

Coleman said he also heard from parents and teachers from Highmeadow, a pilot elementary program, but said the district must follow the contract and state tenure laws. "That is a matter of equity and fairness we set in our contract," he added.

Most of the names on the list were teachers hired after January 1987.

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