

Commerce chief speaks to C of C

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Meyer takes great pride that while he worked for the Michigan Retailers Association the cost of workers' compensation was reduced 25 percent through a self-insured plan. While at Michigan Retailers, Meyer saw membership grow from 700 members to 3,200 members.

"AS I LOOK to the decade of the '90s I believe there are four challenges that I call the four E's: education, exporting, the environment and the economy itself," Meyer said.

The days are gone when a young person could drop out of high school and expect to drop into a high-paying factory job.

"Employers are no longer looking for workers who operate as unthinking cogs in a machine," Meyer said. "Employers are seeking people who can think, who can decide, and who can process the skills and man the technology that is being introduced into the workplace."

Employer training will be an ongoing function.

"Southeast Michigan is right in the middle of the market created by the free trade agreement between the U.S. and Canada," Meyer said.

"One half of the gross national product of the two nations lies

within one-half day's drive from here. The economy between Canada and the United States are intertwined. The American business community has not been framed toward looking toward exporting opportunities."

Meyer predicts an increase in warehousing and distribution centers.

As for the environment, Meyer said that there is increasing pressure on business to decrease waste with reduced landfill space. "There will be a push to develop new markets for recycled materials."

More people are living (9.27 million) and working (4.27 million) in Michigan than ever before, Meyer said. "I never participated with the folks who said, 'Will the last one out of Michigan please turn out the light.'"

Michigan has come back with a strong economy. "For the last three years combined, the state of Michigan has had more money invested in the field of manufacturing than in any other state in the nation," Meyer said.

"Michigan today is also 35 percent less dependent on auto jobs — 92 out of 100 workers are not on the Big Three payroll. What that means is that the economy has become diversified," Meyer said.

PRIOR TO his business career, Meyer served in the U.S. Navy



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Booths and balloons galore were the rule at 'Networking '90,' a business show at Mercy Center, sponsored by the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

during 1964-68, with tours of duty as communications officer, flag lieutenant and officer in charge, as well as manning a river coastal patrol boat in Vietnam.

Speaking of his service in the Navy he said he is reminded of a quote by Winston Churchill: "There's nothing more exhilarating than to be shot at and missed."

He is married to Gail. The couple has four children: Kevin, Kristen, Phillip and Kathleen.

Audience reaction was positive to Meyer's speech. Questions dealt with recycling.

In response to a question from Jody Soronen, Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber executive director, Meyer said the market for recyclables will probably develop on a product-by-product basis. "We are certainly within a wave of recycling research, research and capacity levels," Meyer said.

John Handley of Jervis B. Webb, a materials handling firm in Farmington Hills, was concerned with fast-food plastic foam products. "What people don't realize is that many of the plastic foam materials are recyclable," he said.



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Michael Morris, a network analyst for Computerland, reviews software with Janice LaMothe of Lotus, Southfield, at the business show.

Tupper: Update industrial zoning codes

By Casey Hans staff writer

Farmington city councilman Richard Tupper is eager to revise the city's industrial ordinance so businesses new to the area can follow a new set of rules.

Last week, Tupper pushed to hasten a planning commission study which would set regulations for outside industrial storage. The city council raised the issue in 1989, and planning commissioners are prepared to take it on after completing a revision to the city's sign ordinance in 30 to 60 days.

Tupper said he wishes it could be handled more quickly.

"I have a problem with looking the other way when we have an ordinance on the books," Tupper said. He

said that with nearly 50 percent of the city's industrial park along Eight Mile currently vacant, now would be the perfect time to make a change.

"I just think we need, posthaste, to get this thing resolved. It's an opportune time now."

BUT TUPPER received little support from fellow council members, who seemed to prefer the current timetable of city administrators and planning commission. "We've been looking the other way for years," said councilman Ralph Yoder, adding that the city ignored problems of outside industrial storage for 20 or 25 years until recently.

Councilman William Hartsock stressed that, although "there are certain allowances, we're certainly not looking away" from the problems.

'I have a problem with looking the other way when we have an ordinance on the books.'

— Richard Tupper

The city has stepped up enforcement of its local zoning laws in recent years, by hiring a full-time code enforcement officer and putting an emphasis on enforcement. Code enforcement officer John Konesol has visited every industrial business at least once in 1989 in anticipation of an ordinance change. Those with problems also received letters.

An exterior survey of industrial areas done by Konesol in July of

1989, showed only seven businesses in compliance with current city laws, and 24 with violations of some type. Of the violators, 10 were on Eight Mile, five on Chesley Drive just north of Eight Mile and Nine on Nine Mile Road. Many had multiple violations.

Some of the problems include outside storage of scrap metal, abandoned industrial tanks and barrels, unused recreational vehicles, junk cars; problems with long grass and weeds; and using trailers as permanent storage facilities.

A council consensus at that time was to work with the businesses in an education process, work out language for a reasonable, revised ordinance. Most council members said they had no problem with neatly stacked pallets or storage of a limited

amount of finished product or material to be processed. They looked negatively at scrap metal, storage of non-business related items and manufacturing operations being done outside.

City Manager Robert Deadman told the council last week he would take the task away from planning commissioners if they wanted the job done more quickly, but received no direction in that manner from the council despite Tupper's urging.

He explained the planning commission's time constraints.

"They have shaped a philosophy (for the sign ordinance revision), but haven't yet developed the language," he said. "They'll go after the industrial ordinance. They've been working diligently, but they just haven't gotten to it."

Phone guide deliveries begin April 23

Delivery of Michigan Bell's 1990 America's PagesPlus Farmington Hills Neighborhood telephone directory begins April 23, according to Mary Jo Filarek, local Bell public relations director.

The book has been designed to help customers easily find the information they use most, Filarek said.

Emergency numbers for police and fire departments and other emergency agencies are listed inside the directory's front cover.

A special Senior Citizen information section in the yellow pages identifies services available in the community.

Block grant funds used for a new code officer

By Susan Buck staff writer

Farmington Hills officials last week approved hiring a new code enforcement officer with federal Community Development Block Grant money.

City officials want to use \$40,000 of the total \$358,000 proposed 1990-91 block grant budget to hire a new code enforcement officer specifically for federally designated, low- and moderate-income areas.

The idea stemmed from a March meeting at which Olde Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association officers told the city council that southeast Farmington Hills is plagued with blight, such as junk cars and large trucks.

At the April 23 council meeting, Councilman Jon Grant made a motion supported by Councilman Terry Sever to allocate the money from CDBG funds for a new code enforcement officer. The vote was 4-3 with councilmembers Nancy Bates, Aldo Vagozzini and Ben Marks opposed.

"I want to reiterate my position that I am not going to support the use of \$40,000 for code enforcement," Marks said. "Community block grant money is money that we are able to get back from Washington in order to maintain our infrastructure, and that to me is very important."

City manager William Costick said at the April 9 council meeting that it would be difficult to add such a position, financed by property taxes. Block grant money is a way of

financing the position without making it a tax burden.

"The money is not coming out of rehabilitation, it is coming out of capital," Grant said.

THE CITY is expected to receive \$298,000 in block grant money. About \$80,000 in housing rehabilitation loan repayments will be added to that pot for a total \$358,000.

The proposed allocation includes \$52,000 for administration; \$60,000 for capital improvements; \$200,000 for housing rehabilitation; and \$40,000 for code enforcement.

Money for code enforcement would come out of capital improvements, which originally was allocated \$100,000.

Residents in the targeted area complain of an enforcement problem. Farmington Hills now has four code enforcement officers, three in the field. The new officer returns the city's code enforcement staff to the 1987 level.

"This is new," said zoning supervisor Lee Bilzman. "We haven't sat down and looked at the implications. I don't know the parameters."

Personnel director Dana Whinnery said the salary range for code enforcement officers is \$25,135 to \$33,771. The \$40,000 allocation includes fringe benefits. "It's the first time it has been done this way (out of CDBG funds)," Whinnery said. It will be at least a month before the position is filled.

On April 12, Massie Kurzeja, Olde Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association treasurer, examined, under a Freedom of Informa-

tion Act request, 198 complaints filed in the zoning department that came from her targeted area, as well as those from other areas of the city.

She believes that zoning complaints made from residents in other parts of the city are remedied quicker.

"FIRST-TIME complaints (in other areas) are handled with one call," she said.

"We're your highest density in the city. For every acre, you get five or six houses. For every acre you get up in Woodcreek, you get one house. Of course, you are going to have more complaints," Kurzeja said. "When you look at the figures, I say that you need a new zoning inspector, not one, you need two. You have to look at the city as a whole."

Kurzeja said that she is not knocking the zoning department but the situation reminds her of the Vietnam War and inflated body counts.

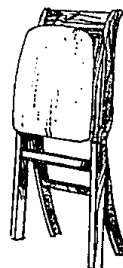
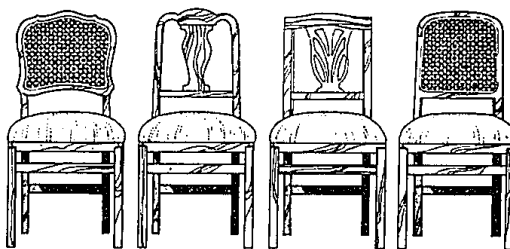
She supports using federal funds for only one year.

"The zoning violations we have are not hidden," Kurzeja said. "You can see them when you drive down the street. I don't think we need our own special zoning enforcement officer. The whole city needs it."

"I don't like us being singled out. If complaints are handled right the first time, there shouldn't be a second one. We're the oldest part of the city. We're not slum. We're not welfare. We are hard-working people. We're the stable part of Farmington Hills. We're not transients," Kurzeja said.

Despite increased costs, the city would maintain a small surplus of \$82,000 going into the new year, Deadman said.

Under state law, all taxing entities in the area have until the first Monday in June to adopt a budget for their fiscal years, which begin July 1. Administrators for the city of Farmington Hills and Farmington Public Schools are expected to propose their annual budgets in May.



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City's budget hearing May 21

Continued from Page 1

up in the coming year, due to rate increases from both the city of Detroit and Oakland County. The last retail rate increase was in 1988.

• Sewer rates will also increase 33 cents per 1,000 gallons used if a sewer bond issue is not approved during a special election May 22. The city will undertake its largest infrastructure project ever this year, expected to cost \$12 million. Taxpayers will foot the bill, whether it is through increased debt service or sewer rate increases.

• Much of the \$827,000 in the capital fund is earmarked for the Orchard Lake Road widening project, scheduled to begin this year. Oakland County is still working to

obtain the property rights of way for construction. The rest will be used to buy a new street sweeper.

• The city also plans to continue levying a 2-mill tax in the Downtown Development Authority district. That tax is used in conjunction with tax increment financing, in which increased property values are captured within the district, to pay for the rejuvenation project, which began in 1987.

• Garbage collection costs will rise by more than \$100,000 in the coming year, Deadman estimates in his proposed budget. Currently budgeted at \$423,000, the 1990-91 expenses are expected to top \$558,000. Deadman said he expects the city to begin curbside recycling in 1991.

• General city employees are proposed to receive a 4.5-percent pay increase. Others range between 4 and 5 percent depending on collective bargaining agreements. Contracts with public safety command officers and officers unions expire on June 30.

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