

A Klein collection  
of rock . . . stars, 6D



District  
finals, 1C

Barbie Doll convention  
makes dreams real, 3A

# Farmington Observer

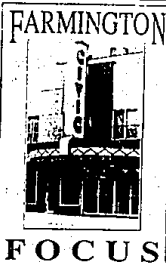
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Farmington, Michigan

48 Pages

Fifty Cents



**FOCUS**  
IT'S CERTAINLY not a banner year — banner-wise, anyway — for the city of Farmington's downtown.

The state Department of Transportation (M-DOT) is giving the city's Downtown Development Authority a tough time about installing decorative banners with sponsor names on them — even though they've been allowed for several years.

The banners, attached to the old-fashioned utility poles along Grand River and Farmington Road, are part of the downtown redevelopment scheme. Many banners announce upcoming events.

Some of them are sponsored by area businesses and the name of the sponsor's name is carried on the banner. M-DOT officials object to the sponsorship in the state right of way.

Rule 76 prohibits commercial or political advertisement on such banners. DDA director Wendy Strip-Sittsamer, however, doesn't think just the name of a company is an advertisement.

"No product or service is mentioned," she said. "It's just a name."

State officials told Strip-Sittsamer that they had made a mistake in allowing banners in the past. She is continuing her appeal.

"I'm at the point now where I'm talking to bosses," she said, "and I'm sure I'll be talking to bosses of bosses."

The DDA has 22 banners. State permits are needed for those on Grand River. The county must give permission for those on Farmington Road. A business would have to pay \$2,700 to sponsor all 22.

Meanwhile, merchants in the Uptown area of Farmington, near Mooney and Grand River, have installed the colorful banners of their own along Grand River — apparently without permission.

City Manager Robert Deadman said state transportation officials have questioned the banners, which may be taken down.

**YOUR VOTE** really does count . . . and if you don't believe it, just switch to cable Channel 12 every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this month.

The Farmington Hills Committee to Increase Voter Participation presents "My Vote Counts," a series focusing on voting for local residents, at the following times: Wednesdays at 8 p.m.; Thursdays, 2 p.m.; and some Fridays, 7 p.m.

March shows include an interview with Barbara Dobb, state representative from West Bloomfield who won election by one vote, and a discussion with Martin Krohn, past president of the Council of Homeowner Associations in Farmington Hills.

Jullianne Hovanecian will host the programs. Comment on the shows is encouraged. Call Dave Teilmeyer at 473-9581.

**THE KING and I**, put on by Mercy High School, will be performed at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 3 p.m. Sunday in Farmington Hills. For ticket information, call 356-7562.

**FROM THE MARCH 15, 1991, Farmington Enterprise:**

Rita Pieron and Gabriele Muhling were named valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively, at Farmington High School.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 21888 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.



The Ramble Hills house in which Kitty Gitulis and her husband, Paul, live represents 20 years of hard work. The latest assessment notice though says the house is worth more than \$800,000. The Gituliss say they couldn't sell it for that much.

## Tax trauma Dream homes have nightmare assessments

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Imagine if you can Kitty and Paul Gitulis pay \$20,000 in property taxes. Kim and Fred Addenou pay more than \$10,000. Bea and Rick Palmer pay \$14,000.

"I thought I was going to throw up," said Kitty Gitulis when she opened the notice telling her the property tax assessment on her house is \$448,600.

An assessment is 50 percent of the property's fair market value. That means Gitulis's house is supposed to be worth more than \$800,000. That's news to the couple who just moved into the house in September 1989.

They say they couldn't sell the Tudor-style house for that, especially in the current weak real estate market.

**"I'm not wearing my two-carat diamond ring. I decided to put it into my house. Who could afford to pay \$20,000-\$25,000 in taxes?"**

— Homeowner Kitty Gitulis

"I'm not wearing my two-carat diamond ring. I decided to put it into my house," Gitulis said. "Who could afford to pay \$20,000-\$25,000 in taxes?"

Gitulis and the other Farmington Hills residents live in Ramble Hills subdivision, west of Farmington

Road and north of 11 Mile. And they are upset about the assessments on their relatively new, custom houses that are in the 3,000-4,000-square-foot and \$300,000 price ranges.

BUT THEY'RE not alone, another 50-some Ramble Hills residents joined them Wednesday night at

the Palmer's house to discuss their plight.

Some houses are assessed much higher than the market value, said Bill Lamping, Ramble Hills Homeowners Association president.

Ramble Hills residents say they have suffered incredible increases in their property tax assessments in the last few years. But this year's notices were "the straw that broke the camel's back," Lamping said.

The Palmer house, for example, is assessed at \$204,000. Their house has been up for sale for 1 1/2 years. "I don't believe the assessment can support sales of over \$200,000. They aren't selling," said Rick Palmer.

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## Babb to get earful Assessor hears complaints

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington Hills assessor Dean Babb will meet Tuesday night with Ramble Hills residents who are upset with their property tax assessments.

They asked him to come out and meet with them. "I'll try as best I can to answer their questions," Babb said.

Residents in Ramble Hills, about 1 1/2 miles east of Farmington, who are supposed to be paying 50 percent of the usual selling price, would if doubled still be far above any price they could get for their houses in the current depressed housing market.

Based on recorded sales in the subdivision so far, each evening thing that sold there is no evidence on a subdivision basis that assessments exceed 50 percent," Babb said.

That doesn't mean an individual property isn't over 50 percent. That's the system," Babb said.

The assessment process determines the true cash value of property for the purpose of calculating property taxes. It is based on sales data from the last 12 months.

FOR ANOTHER example, Babb said, a house that sold for \$100,000 in 1989 is now assessed at \$100,000. But if it sold for \$150,000 in 1990, it would be assessed at \$150,000.

An assessment is a subjective and mail, Babb said. "We use a computer sales data. But we have to put eye on things through a professional division. Babb said.

Mayor Alvin Kagan will preside Wednesday night at the city division, areas for assessment purposes. Your area, Ramble Hills, is an entity all by itself," Babb said.

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## Headlee opinion due on Hills parks tax

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington Hills economist Patrick Anderson and tax cutter Richard Headlee are getting close to a verdict on the city's half-mill levy for parks and recreation.

A decision on whether or not they will give their blessing to the Farmington Hills parks and recreation levy, which will go before voters

May 7, was expected a week ago. But the tax fight duo didn't get the requested financial information from the city and parks and recreation department as expected.

"We won't make a decision until we see their books," Anderson said late Thursday.

A couple of hours later, Anderson, an economist at Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Company of America, received the requested

financial information over the facsimile machine.

"We are in budget," said Dan Potter, director of the Farmington Hills special services department. City personnel are in the process of drafting the new 1991-92 city budget. Finance (department) also has been bogged down in the budget, so we had to wait.

WITH THE documents in hand, Anderson

and Headlee expect to give their final ruling plan to deliver a verdict on the city's proposed parks and recreation millage sometime this week.

"We want to make sure the tax is well-spent. We will look at the millage rates and the half-mill levy and see if we can citizens if they vote for it will get what they

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## Board gets preview of coming secondary school proposals

By Casey Hane  
staff writer

The first phase of a proposal to change the way middle school and high school students learn and the way teachers teach will be presented Tuesday, March 19, to the Farmington School Board.

"It's fashionable to say 'all kids can learn,' but it needs to be amended to say 'not in the same way and not on the same day,'" said superintendent Michael Flanagan, who recently offered school board members and the public a taste of what to expect at upcoming meetings.

Farmington's school chief called the tentative recommendations from a Secondary Study Committee which has taken two years to review education in Farmington Public Schools "very exciting."

But he warned board members they will not hear

about the study at one meeting, and vote on it at the next.

CONCEPTS INCLUDING alternative scheduling, discussion of how teachers test and evaluate student performance, and presentation of lesson plans are expected to be part of the proposal. Flanagan said the district may also review the possibility of offering a "community service credit" for students.

The first phase of the study to be presented March 19 will encompass high school education, while future meetings will address specific middle school ideas including a possible magnet-type school or a program similar to Highmeadow Common Campus Elementary.

Although Flanagan said the proposals may "have a complication added with our millage defeat," he said many of the items could be implemented without additional cost to the district.

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