

## Postal service is under fire

Continued from Page 1

SHE HOPES U.S. Rep. William Broomfield, R-Lake Orion, "gets the word and does something about this fairly soon and this situation gets resolved. It's a situation that I do happen to know something about and I commend it to you for any action."

Mark Bate, officer-in-charge of the Farmington and Farmington Hills branches, took issue with Fox's complaints.

The Royal Oak sectional office is number eight (in service and customer satisfaction) of 115 areas "throughout the country," Bates said. Mayor Aldo Vaggoni expressed concerns about why branch office windows were closed Saturday, Oct. 12, the Saturday before the Columbus Day holiday on Oct. 14. It all amounted to four days of reduced service, he said.

Bate added that there was a postal employee in the lobby of the Hills branch Saturday instructing customers how to use the self-service vending machine.

Newly installed is a machine called Genie, which allows customers to weigh parcels, register and certify mail 24 hours a day.

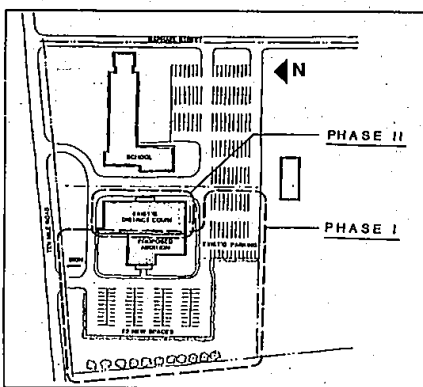
SATURDAY window operation, especially before holidays, is basically under the jurisdiction of each local postmaster, Bate said.

Bate said that Harris is still considered the Farmington area postmaster even though he is still on extended medical leave.

If there was ever a new postmaster appointed, the city and press are invited because it is really a big function," Bate said. "Mr. Harris is still postmaster of this post office."

Sue Moore, postal spokeswoman said that she would not give out Harris' number nor would she ask him to call the Observer because that would "not be appropriate."

Vaggoni said Bate plans to attend today's council meeting.



## Vote of the people will decide court size

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington and Farmington Hills voters will be asked Nov. 5 whether they will help pay for a more than 9,000-foot proposed expansion of the 47th District Court to house a third judge and support staff.

The expansion would be on the west side of the existing 13,883-square-foot courthouse on 10 Mile and would add another 9,500 square feet, according to architect Al-Jen of John Allen Architects, Farmington.

The first phase would involve the actual addition. The current probation area, magistrate hearing room and employee lounge will be converted to the third courtroom. Employees who work in those areas will be moved to the addition when it is completed.

The addition would house the pro-

bation department, a magistrate hearing room, a jury assembly room, an employee lounge, clerical area and storage. New furnishings would be included.

A THIRD courtroom would be built in the existing courthouse. If approved, the bond money would pay to renovate the existing courtroom and chambers to match the new area, modify the police holding area to access the two existing courtrooms and refurbish the exterior of the building.

Bond money also would be used to repair and repave the court parking lot, put in an additional 72 parking spaces by the addition and improve landscaping.

While the bond issue would pay for expansion and renovation, it would not pay for additional staff — perhaps seven employees — that accompany the need for a third judge and expanded operations.

## Court needs another judge

Continued from Page 1

"I HAVE NO problem with a third judge or a better facility. I don't understand why if this is a money-making operation, why are the cities being asked to pay the costs of expansion," said Sowerby, an attorney and a former appointed court member. "I'm not sure this is the only alternative or the best alternative. But it may be."

At a candidates debate, Sowerby, 47, wondered whether the 12 Mile Farmington Community Library facility — should a new library be built elsewhere — could be used for a larger courthouse.

ATTORNEY AND two-year councilman Larry Lichtman, 33, supports the addition of a third judge as well as courthouse expansion. "I don't see any downside to it at all. With a third judge, the court expansion will more or less pay for itself with fines, etc."

Two-year councilwoman Nancy Bates, 58, a legislative aide for state Rep. Jan Dolan of Farmington Hills, also supports an expanded court and third judge. The court, she said, is reaching the point with an overload of cases for two judges that some people who have been arrested will be released because they can't have a timely hearing.

Six-year councilman Terry Sever, 41, said he's also concerned about providing timely trials and finds the bond proposal to be the cheapest method of expansion. He also prefers to keep the courthouse where it is on 10 Mile.

SEVER ALSO said at a candidates night that he believes money brought in by a third judge — fines, court costs — will pay for any bonds.

Challenger Joanne Smith, 65, a former council member in the 1970s, said it's not wise to count on the library moving out of its existing building on 12 Mile. "I hope educated voters will understand the issue (court expansion) and vote (in support)"

port.)"

In a recession, challenger Ron Oliverio, 37, who lost his first bid in 1989 for a council seat, says he's hesitant about "any government expanding." But he's quick to add, "I'm leaning toward it providing there's no other alternative." Write-in candidate Andrew Rakackowski, 22, an Army reservist who plans to begin graduate school in November, supports court expansion. "I feel we should expand the court. Crime has risen in the city."

Because the judges have more cases than other big district courts in Oakland County, some have requested a third judge and expanded court facility to house the new judge and support staff.

The state Legislature already approved a third judge. But the approval was effective only through 1990. Another request has been made.

IF HIRING a third judge is approved, expected sometime in late 1991 or early 1992 — candidates would seek election in November 1992, and a new judge would begin in January, 1993.

Two judicial seats actually will be open at that time because Chief Judge Margaret Schaeffer's term will be up, and she cannot seek re-election because of her age.

The judges — Schaeffer and Fred Harris — are seeking expansion and renovation now, so an additional courtroom and other offices are ready when — and if — a new judge begins work in 1993.

IF VOTERS don't approve the bond proposals, Schaeffer and Harris said a third judge will still be needed and room will somehow have to be made within the existing facility.

According to court records, the court caseload rose from 22,399 in 1983 to 37,340 in 1990. The court is the 14th busiest court in the state based on case filings per judge. The state average is 12,082 case filings per judge. In 1990, the 47th District Court had 17,130 filings per judge.

## election notes

Editor's note: Throughout the 1991 races for Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils, we will include under this heading items such as scheduled candidates nights, endorsements, campaign information or other tidbits voters may find interesting about the political race. The election is Tuesday, Nov. 5.

• The Farmington Hills candidates are also expected to attend a candidates forum sponsored by the Council of Homeowner Associations of Farmington Hills at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 23. The debate will be in council chambers, 31555 11 Mile.

The candidates will be interviewed by a three-member panel, which includes Marty Krohner, COHA trustee and past president, Wendy Strip-Sittamer, executive director of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority, and Tom Baer, Farmington Observer editor.

The event will be cablecast live, as well as tape delay. Questions will be taken from members of the audience, as well as by phone from home viewers. Refreshments will be served following the program.

• The seven Farmington Hills City Council candidates are expected to attend a candidates forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the Oakland Area at 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 25, at Farmington Hills City Hall, 31555 11 Mile.

The event will be cablecast live on Channel 12.

• Tune into local access cable channel 12 at 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 5, as the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission and MetroVision of Oakland County present live election night coverage for the cities of Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi.

Hosts and moderators for the televised evening will be state Reps. Jan Dolan and Bill Bullard. They will guide poll watchers from city to city for the latest coverage of precinct by precinct election results.

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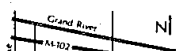
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