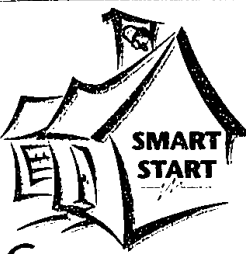


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IN THE PAPER
TODAY


- Another look:** A controversial project getting another look from the city. It may be the last look. /8A
- No parking, please:** To unclog their street, Earl Court residents have given up the right to park in front of their homes. /12A
- Let the music play:** It's only rehearsal, but the Hills are alive with the sound of music. /13A

OPINION

Development dustups: There are lessons to be learned from the three development skirmishes taking place in Farmington Hills. /18A

SPORTS

Hooping to it: North Farmington, a finalist in the Western Lakes basketball tournament last season, hopes to be as successful this year. /1B



Please accept our apology for any telephone inconvenience experienced over the past week and a half. Our phone usage increased significantly because of our successful launch of the O&E Internet program. Telephone traffic servicing Internet users has been separated from lines used by our newspaper customers. Your patience is appreciated.

—Steve Barnaby
Publisher
The Observer Newspapers

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Floyd A. Cairns

Mr. Farmington Hills dies

Floyd A. Cairns, who helped guide Farmington Hills from farms and orchards to bustling suburb, is dead at 79. "He was like a father to this community," said a friend and colleague.

BY TOM BAKER
STAFF WRITER

They called him "Mr. Farmington Hills"—and with good reason. Floyd A. Cairns, whose name graces the Farmington Hills City Hall, was township and city clerk for 29 years before his retirement 10 years ago. He was the one they always went to when they wanted to know what was what in the city.

"This city functions well today because of the work he did back then," said Bob McConnell, who was a Farmington Township supervisor during part of Floyd Cairns' long reign as clerk.

Mr. Cairns, a lifelong resident of Farmington Hills, died of congestive heart failure Tuesday at St. Mary's Hospital in Livonia. He was 79.

Dedicated, conscientious, courteous and helpful are a few of the kind words used by former colleagues to describe Mr. Cairns, who was in office 21 years ago when Farmington Township became the city of Farmington Hills.

"He was a very dedicated, quiet, conscientious public servant," said McConnell. "He did a lot of good work for the city. I remember that he

See CAIRNS, 6A

Race puts zoom into downtown Farmington



AMT HEALTH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Grudge winner: Steve Brock, assistant city manager in Farmington Hills, won the so-called Grudge Match between his city and Farmington.

1st mini prix's a gas: Race fuels charities

BY DIANE HANSON
STAFF WRITER

What the crowd lacked in size, it more than made up in excitement and enthusiasm at the first-annual Mini Prix in downtown Farmington on Sunday.

"I've never seen anything like this. It's a lot of fun," said Beth Moskalis of Farmington Hills. She came with her children, Drew, 10, who would like to race a go-cart sometime, and Natalie, 6, as well as husband, Mark.

"It's a blast," he said. "It looks like all the council members feel pretty silly sitting in those cars. It's good to see that. It's kind of nice to be able to come out and see the council members and the mayor and everybody in person."

The onlookers were treated to Farmington and Farmington Hills officials pitted in an all-for-fun go-cart race on the one-third of a mile track, as well as corporate-sponsored drivers jockeying for position at speeds up to 22 miles per hour with local charities the beneficiaries of the prize money.

Robbi Gelman, who along with Deborah Grant, are longtime Farmington Hills residents and partners in Gelman & Grant Management, promoter of the event, estimated the crowd at between 500-700 spectators. The partners were not at all discouraged by the first year turnout.

The management duo were inspired after attending a Mini Indy in South Haven, Mich., and decided to bring the concept to Farmington.

"It was wonderful," Gelman said of the South Haven event. "It took them a little while to get it developed but, after four years, they have over 10,000 people that go."

Event will catch on

Farmington Hills City Manager Bill Costick said driving in the prix was "a lot of fun." He anticipates that the event will become more and more popular.

"I don't think people knew what to expect," said Costick. "I think, in the future, word will get out, people will talk about it and it will be a lot of fun for people. I think it will grow."

That's just what Gelman and Grant are counting on. This year's

See PRIZ, 3A

Area police take aim at frivolous in crime bill

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

While President Clinton's anti-crime bill languishes on Capitol Hill, Farmington area police officials give the plan both merits and demerits.

Features they take a shine to: \$13.9 billion earmarked for 100,000 additional officers, truth in sentencing, prison-based drug prevention programs, more prisons, and locking up habitual violent criminals.

Features that take away the bill's luster: \$7 billion worth social crime-prevention programs such as midnight basketball.

"To me, I smell pork," said Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss.

Opinions vary on banning assault weapons. Which is not surprising since that part is the biggest source of debate and said to be the main stumbling block to the bill passing.

Farmington Hills Deputy Chief Mimi Spencer favors such a ban.

"I think if we're going to have assault weapons, I think they should be with the military or with the police departments," Spencer said. "I don't think John Q. Citizen should be able to purchase an assault weapon."

"We're faced with that now. Where we're outgunned on the street."

Before such a ban goes into place, a lot of thought should go into it, Goss said. He believes such issues are better handled at the state level.

"I don't think we should paint with such a broad brush we wind up getting a knee-jerk reaction to one incident," Goss said. "If you're going to look at gun control, you're going to have to look at training, certification, and statistically what weapons are causing us the most problems."

"I think we have to look at the empirical data instead of the emotionalism."

Another problem is the bill tries to be too all-encompassing, Goss said, noting its 1,000 pages in details. Several features would likely pass if separated and voted on on their own merits, he added.

For example, Goss points to prison-based substance abuse programs, which have been proven to work.

See BILL, 2A

Residents of aging neighborhood welcome plan

BY BILL COUATIN
STAFF WRITER

While development has become a dirty word to many residents in Farmington Hills, there are some living between Northwestern Highway and Orchard Lake who see it as the only way out of a declining neighborhood.

"It's like a window is closing on us," said Rick Zerbo, a Hills resident who built his home on Clairview 16 years ago. "Nobody wants to buy into this neighborhood."

Nobody except NCC-C Corp., a development company that is proposing a shopping mall with a Super Kmart store on 55 acres on the south side of Northwestern. If that project, which the planning commission has approved for qualification as a planned unit development, is built, Zerbo and other residents would be bought out by the company. That's exactly what they want.

That has brought criticism, especially from some West Bloomfield residents who live on 14 Mile Road. They fear the development would add traffic to an already congested area.

But Hills residents in the area see no alternative. They say because West Bloomfield did not allow Northwestern Highway to go through the township and connect with US-24, traffic has built up in their neighborhood, making life there a nightmare.

"We're surrounded by commercial development," said Pat Allen, who moved to Clairview 17 years ago when the area was countryside. "We have an office complex to the east, a golf course to the south, the Macaroni Grill, Office Max and Chili's to the north and Orchard Lake to the west. Now we've got all this traffic around us."

Allen and Zerbo have seen property values decline, while assessments rise, especially since the restaurant located on Northwestern, about 4 years ago. Restaurant customers who miss the entrance to the restaurants often use residents' driveways as

See DEVELOPMENT, 2A