



Holiday arrival: Above, Mayor Larry Lichtman greets Santa Claus, who arrived at the holiday lighting ceremony Nov. 29 in a Farmington Hills Fire Department truck. At right, Hills council members Aldo Vagnozzi (left) and Nancy Bates sing along with other carolers.



Light load: Casey Ayres, 3, gets a better view of the lighting ceremony on top of her father Tom's shoulders. The Farmington Hills family was part of an estimated crowd of 50 people who turned out for the event at city offices.

Hills' lighting greets season

Sure, there were plenty of people to "ooh" and "ahh" at the Farmington Hills City Hall holiday lighting ceremony Nov. 29.

Then again, they probably don't have to look at the electric bill.

City officials think such displays are worth it, though, especially if it illuminates the festive mood of residents.

"I think it's an activity that is a nice setting to get everyone into the mood for the holidays," said Hills Recreation Superintendent Andrew Lang. "The kids are excited about Santa coming."

It's a nice family activity.

Some 50 hardy souls turned out in a bracing wind for the second annual event.

Hills Mayor Larry Lichtman expressed the need to be thankful for the holiday season. Some 20 members from the Hills Community Choir serenaded the crowd with holiday classics.

Santa Claus made a first-class entrance thanks to the Hills Fire Department.

After the tree lighting, city officials and residents alike retreated to the council chambers for refreshments. Santa listened to gift wishes.

Council sips on liquor license policy

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Council members plan to come up with a policy that will take some of the confusion out of applying for a liquor license in the city.

Council members reviewed a tentative policy developed by City Clerk Kathy Dornan and City Attorney John Donohue that would provide "reasonable criteria to guide (city council) decisions" concerning the granting of liquor licenses.

Farmington Hills is allowed a certain number of liquor licenses based on the 10-year census. The 1990 census gave the city an additional four licenses, of which three have already been awarded to local establishments.

There have been many more applicants than licenses in the past, leaving the council to choose some and reject other applicants.

That has sometimes put the

city in a position of choosing larger establishments that do more business over smaller restaurants, leaving council members sensitive to notions of unfairness.

And because the city has not made any final decision on whether a restaurant at the new ice arena will serve alcohol, and therefore, require a liquor license, the issue has been further complicated.

For that reason, the council put a moratorium on issuing its last license from February until the end of the year, when it would have a comprehensive policy.

Donohue said he and Dornan had "some concerns" about establishing a minimum investment requirement for any establishment seeking a license, especially in light of reservations by some council members that smaller businesses have a chance at one of the city's licenses.

"From an advisory point of view, we didn't think it was our place to suggest that there be a minimum," Donohue said. "I think that council does have to be concerned with establishing minimum criteria, particularly where it comes to investments."

In addition to new licenses of its own, the city also must process liquor license transfers, which Dornan said were treated like the city's own licenses.

"We do the same background checks and building inspections for the transfers as we do for new applicants," she said.

Councilwoman Nancy Bates said in addition to liquor license transfers and new licenses, many businesses buy licenses from outside the area, such as resort licenses, that are controlled by the state.

Donohue and Dornan will submit a policy for final action in December. The moratorium's term ends Dec. 31.

Thieves, con artists count on yule money

BY SUK BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Be street smart - anytime and anywhere.

That's the advice from Farmington area police officials, who caution people that con artists are out there during the Christmas season and all year-round.

"There's not a heck of a lot of holiday con stuff in Farmington Hills," said Hills police officer Mike LaFave. "But you do want to avoid being victimized."

He warns residents never to give out their credit card numbers to solicitors who call you first. "If you call them, that's different," LaFave said.

Always make sure you get the carbon copies from transactions and hang onto receipts. The unscrupulous person can use personal credit-card numbers to their advantage.

Write checks and use credit cards rather than cash. LaFave also advises not to try to do all your holiday shopping in one day, carrying \$1,000-\$1,500 in cash around, as well as mounds of packages.

"Don't flash cash," said Farm-

ington police commander Chuck Lee. Don't store gifts in the car's back seat. Police advise putting them in the trunk.

Always have keys in your hand when going to your car, and look inside before you enter to make sure no one is lurking inside.

"When making purchases, try to have the exact amount of money for the purchase ready and don't 'advertise' that you have a lot of money," Lee said.

Kays can also be used as a weapon.

Don't expect con artists to be ruffled, old men either.

Recently, the Salvation Army received reports about young boys selling candy.

Two were observed at downtown Farmington businesses. One said that he was selling candy for the "Salvation Army's football team."

The Salvation Army has no such team, said Karen Guerrero, office manager for the Farmington Salvation Army.

"Kettles and mail are our only fund-raisers," Guerrero said. "This (candy selling) has been go-

ing on for a couple of years and we don't know how to stop it."

People reported being approached by "Salvation Army" candy sellers in Livonia's Seven Mile and Farmington area also, Guerrero said.

If in doubt about suspicious circumstances, crime prevention experts urge calling the police. The police will want to know what happened, where it took place, when it happened, which way the suspect went, and the license-plate number of the car.

They will want a good, detailed description of the person involved. Try to compare his size and weight to someone you know, police advise.

Discuss any and all business matters with friends and relatives before you sign any contract or give away any money. Good sources for advice are: the Better Business Bureau, Legal Aid Assistance/Society, attorneys and law enforcement agencies.

Don't remain silent about these crimes, police said. The con artist depends on people not telling anyone so that he can continue to operate.

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