



Sopping up the spill: James Doyle of Young's Environmental Cleanup, handles the cleanup of a lawn chemical spill.



Hose to hydrant: Farmington Hills firefighters (from left) Bruce Belsky, Ken Bloch and John Kastran hook up a hose to battle a chemical spill.

1 hurt, chemical spills in crash

Farmington Hills police are investigating an accident in which a woman was injured and about 250 gallons of lawn fertilizer and herbicide were spilled from a truck Tuesday morning.

A Dodge Caravan driven by Dorothy Bernius was struck in the rear by a truck belonging to Turf Tenders of Southfield at about 11:15 a.m. on westbound 12 Mile west of Middlebelt.

Bernius was taken to Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills where she was kept overnight for observation. She was listed in stable condition, but doctors wanted to be sure there were no internal injuries.

Farmington Hills firefighters and Youngs Environmental of Flint used water and vacuum trucks to clean up the spill. The road was blocked for about a half hour and then was reduced to one-lane traffic on the south lanes.

Lt. Tom Shurtliff of the Hills Fire Department, who was on the scene, said the spill did not cause problems, but the liquid had to be picked up.

"Probably the only result of the spill will be some greener weeds," he said.

Liquor violations are cited

Two businesses were cited during a liquor sting by Farmington police.

Bel-Aire Lanes and Page's Food & Spirits were ticketed for selling to a minor decoy — an area high school senior — and a report was filed with the state Liquor Control Commission.

Overall, Farmington police visited 18 businesses during a two-day period. Police were pleased with the results, noting the decrease in abuses in recent years.

There was only one citation issued in 1993 compared to seven in 1992. No sting occurred in 1994.

"It's low," Farmington Public Safety Deputy Director Mike Wiggins said. "It's the fact that our officers go around on a liquor inspection in April and educating business owners on the importance of checking identification and not selling to minors."

An employee at Bel-Aire Lanes served the 17-year-old girl a wine spritzer May 8, and a Page's waitress served a bottle of Corona to the decoy on May 9. Neither asked for identification.

Business owners were told by police a sting would be taking place.

Patterson kills veto, opening way for jail expansion

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

A political showdown between county commissioners and L. Brooks Patterson may have been averted when the county executive rescinded his veto of a \$3.5 million expansion plan at the Oakland County jail.

"It is clear that I have accomplished my goal," Patterson said in a statement released Tuesday on the withdrawal of his surprise veto last Thursday. "There will not be \$1 million in additional subsidies for the nine townships and one city (Rochester Hills) at the expense of the remainder of the county."

But Patterson may also have averted an override of the veto by commissioners who said the executive had arbitrarily coupled two separate issues — the jail expansion and the cost of contracting with the sheriff's department for law enforcement services.

"The votes were there to override," according to commissioner Sue Ann Douglas, R-Rochester, who said the issue is not over. Withdrawing the veto takes the immediate pressure off, she said, but the issue is not resolved.

Commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills, Wednesday said withdrawing the veto was "the right thing for the executive to do. It was a wise move that came about through compromise."

The compromise — as outlined in Patterson's withdrawal message — involved commissioners agreeing to reconsider the rate for contracting sheriff's services. "I have been assured by commissioners that the contract rates will be changed and made more fair."

The linkage between the jail expansion and the cost of contracting for sheriff's services was made by Patterson last week when he said the county could not afford to spend \$3.5 million on new jail facilities while at the same time undercharging to communities that contract for sheriff's deputies rather than funding their own police departments.

Patterson insisted that undercharging for contract services cost about \$1 million and amounted to "a gift" from communities that fund their own departments to areas that contract instead.

But vetoing the jail expansion, he forced commissioners to reconsider the cost of sheriff's contracts, Patterson insisted.

Others didn't see the issue in that light.

"I had not intention of negotiating (about the sheriff's contracts) with a veto hanging over our heads," said commissioner Larry P. Crake, chair of the county board of commissioners.

"I was prepared to ask the board for an override (at today's regular board meeting), but the executive's withdrawal made that unnecessary," said Crake, a Waterford Republican. "It was the right thing to do."

The withdrawal of the veto means the county can go ahead with building two temporary facilities in Auburn Hills to ease overcrowding.

Sheriff John F. Nichols insisted the facilities are needed because of acute overcrowding. The jail has been at or near its maximum capacity of 1,676 inmates for about two years. He said any influx of prisoners might necessitate releasing some to make room for those newly sentenced. Renegotiations on the sheriff's contract will resume next week at a meeting of the board's finance and personnel committee. As approved in other committee meetings, the cost was to increase about seven percent over three years. Patterson has asked for a 12 percent increase.

Will the veto leave any hard feelings?

"I don't think so," said Wolf. "In politics, we have to deal with one issue and go on to the next."

Compromise had always been a possibility, according to commissioner Thomas A. Levy, R-West Bloomfield. "I always thought the communities that contract for sheriff's services should pay more. But the county badly needs the jail space."

Commissioner Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham, sees the issue as the newest manifestation of an old dispute: the delivery of county services to urban versus rural communities.

There's always been a dispute about whether urban communities receive a disproportionate share of services compared with their rural counterparts. In other words, do Birmingham, Troy or Southfield receive more in county services than Addison, Holly, Oxford, Rose and other rural townships?

"There's always some trade off," Jensen said. "But on balance, I think it's almost equal."

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