



Room with a view: Once completed, the Farmington Hills Department of Public Works building on 12 Mile and Halsted roads will offer better lighting and ventilation.

DPW facility brings brighter outlook

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

City workers at the Farmington Hills Department of Public Works will breathe a sigh of relief — literally — when construction on the main building on Halsted south of 12 Mile is completed.



Super's word: Dan Rooney, superintendent, said the building will be ready by late March.

New technology to increase schools' visibility on cable

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When some 200 West Bloomfield families turn on cable TV, they see information on schools in Walled Lake, Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham and, of course, West Bloomfield.

They still feel left out: Children of those families attend Farmington Public Schools, which is not featured on the city's cable system. With six school districts serving one community, there's little room.

"They (Farmington schools' TV-10) show a lot of things that I'm interested in and I can't see it," said Michelle Diakin, a West Bloomfield resident whose two children attend Eagle Elementary in the Farmington district. "It's not fair."

"Last year, they showed our school's talent show and we weren't able to watch it."

New technology — chiefly fiber optic wiring — could change that.

Through a process called narrow-casting, cable operators can pinpoint transmission of channels to 56 separate nodes serving 2,000 homes each. Time Warner officials are touting potential benefits for its customers.

For Farmington area subscribers, it could result in seeing more Farmington Public Schools programming. Farmington schools share TV-10 with Novi and Clarenceville districts.

"People in Farmington Hills are seeing information about the Novi schools, which is for the most part irrelevant to them," said Bob McCann, regional gen-

eral manager for Time Warner. "What our ability to narrow-cast does is give Novi (schools) Channel 10 and the Farmington schools Channel 10."

"Only those people in Farmington will see information about the Farmington school district and only those people in Novi will see information about the Novi school district."

Time Warner is talking with the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission on narrow-casting, McCann said. No time table is set.

Time Warner and SWOCC are renegotiating their franchise agreement.

"Just about everything we're doing right now has something to do with negotiations," McCann said.

The Farmington district programming would be on 24 hours a day instead of 28 hours a week.

Twenty-eight hours a week of Farmington-flavored programming, though, is more than southeast West Bloomfield residents are getting now.

"We're real concerned those people are covered and get the programming we want," said Peggy Schmidt, media specialist.

Franchise agreements are negotiated between cable companies and individual cities. Those pacts include use of public access and municipal channels for cities and schools.

However, school district boundaries differ from city limits.

Not only does the Farmington school district cut into a southern part of West Bloomfield, two

other districts serve Farmington Hills. Some 600 families from southeast Farmington Hills attend Clarenceville schools and 440 from the northeast corner go to Walled Lake schools, Schmidt said.

Cable companies in Birmingham, Livonia and Ferndale have been able to work out agreements where different school districts serve city residents, Schmidt said.

The Greater West Bloomfield Cable Advisory Board and the city's cable provider Continental are studying the issue, said Dave Albery, administrator for the board.

The system carries four school channels, including West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, Walled Lake and Birmingham, Albery said. Pontiac schools also serves West Bloomfield.

Continental starts a fiber optic upgrade of West Bloomfield in April.

Continental is looking at design plans to see if it's feasible to narrow-cast down to individual homes. Company officials should know in about a month, said Michael DiMaria, corporate affairs manager. A typical fiber optic node can handle a signal to 500 homes.

"In looking at it, it should be able to happen," DiMaria said.

"There's some costs involved and we're with the (West Bloomfield) cable authority."

"It would really solve a number of problems. You can go down to one channel, but each node — depending where they lived — would receive a different channel."

4,000 tons of salt.

"The problem is that when we need salt, everybody needs it," Rooney said. "This way, we can have it on hand and not be at the mercy of a supplier."

Most of the city's vehicles are diesel, requiring garage space to keep them from becoming too cold to operate in winter.

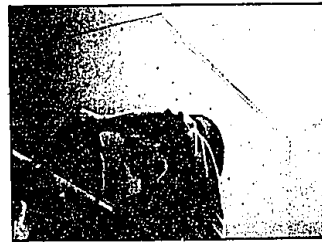
The new facility also features two washer bays, two repair bays, a larger tool crib, front office, employee locker facilities, a heavy construction roof (designed to withstand tornadoes), a training room for fitness equipment and two fuel islands outside.

With 34 full-time employees and 20 seasonal employees, the facility will provide a safer and more efficient work place, Rooney said.

Although the new building will be 85 percent filled with the city's existing equipment, Rooney said city officials aren't worried because the city's infrastructure, roads and population will not expand much further as the community matures.

A new exhaust system will maintain air quality year round and keep the building dry.

The new salt dome, with a 90-foot diameter compared with 60-feet on the existing dome, will allow the city to buy larger quantities of rock salt at a better price with the ability to put it on the road when needed. Its capacity will increase from 1,200 to



Light work: Don Conley, a carpenter for Premacon Inc., works on a skylight to bring in natural light into the building that has very few windows.



Step by step: Dave Richey spreads out the sealant as Hills DPW co-worker Dave Richter assists.

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YMCA HIGHLIGHTS

PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL — SEMINAR ON SPORTS INJURIES
Beginning Feb. 26 and every other Tuesday for three Tuesdays, Providence Hospital will be presenting seminars on sports injuries and the athlete at the Farmington Family YMCA. The first will focus on stepping toward healthy lifestyles and how to prevent sports injuries.

The speaker will be Dr. Scott Eathorne. It begins at 11:30 and includes a snack and beverage. The cost is \$3/\$5. It is open to the public and will help sports enthusiasts plan their spring training.

POSITIVE LIVING SKILLS
Botsford Hospital's Health Development Network will conduct two separate workshops

geared to acquiring positive living skills. Stress Management and positive living skills will be presented on four Tuesdays beginning at 11:30 a. m. on March 4. The first one will focus on low-fat cooking and a demonstration will be included. Both are located in the intergenerational center of the Farmington Family YMCA.