

Postal chief wants stamp of approval

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Marlene Bowers' mail route has taken her on a winding path from Duluth, Minn., to California and South Carolina. She's not ready to be returned to sender just yet.

Bowers plans to remain awhile as Farmington postmaster. She's bought a home near the old Slocum Street post office and is enraptured by her new surroundings.

Bowers has been on the job since April. She'll be officially sworn in July 15 during a ceremony at the new downtown Farmington U.S. Postal Store.

"When I was interviewed in January, I said if this is the worst weather I get, I'll be doing OK," said Bowers, reminiscing about her native Minnesota city where temperatures dip to 40- below.

"You remember the time on TV when they threw the glass of water in the air and it froze before hitting the ground? That was in Duluth."

Duluth is a warm place in terms of friendliness, Bowers said. A mail carrier there is considered just as much a friend than as a civil servant.

"You have 400 people who are happy to see you every day," Bowers said. "You know how people will say my mail carrier. They don't say my IRS agent."

"They enjoy that customer contact."

The postal service is more customer driven for good reason: A growing number of private companies want its customers.



STAFF PHOTO BY BRADON LEMMON

Postmaster delivers: New Farmington Postmaster Marlene Bowers had the highest customer satisfaction rating while in charge of the Simpsonville, S.C., post office. She will be officially sworn in as Farmington Postmaster on July 15.

That's not lost on the 29-year U.S. postal employee, who started as a mail carrier in San Francisco.

As postmaster in Simpsonville, S.C., Bowers' department had the highest customer satisfaction rating in the state's upper region.

Bowers stepped in and set goals: Have mail in post office boxes by 10 a.m. and to residents by 4 p.m. She also established a customer advisory council in that area, which was experiencing phenomenal 11 percent annual growth.

She has similar plans for Farmington, though the task is a bit more daunting.

There are 103 routes with 41,000 delivery points in the Farmington Hills and Farmington area. Bowers oversees 269

postal employees.

"In an area like this, you deal with transportation and logistical issues," she said. "In Simpsonville, it might take 20 minutes to drive 10 miles. Here, it could take 45 minutes because it's a major metropolitan area."

Bowers is what her superiors wanted in a new Farmington postmaster, said Bob Dreith, post office operations manager. "Her performance in that (Simpsonville) office is what I was looking for," Dreith said. "She was doing all the things internally that one would expect from a successful manager."

"What we are embarking on is an endeavor to improve postal service for our customers in Farmington and that is one of her strong points."

Bowers' career path had few

impediments.

After eight years on the route, she spent five years as a clerk. She went into management, becoming a superintendent of postal operations and senior operations analyst in southern California.

She was named postmaster in Simpsonville in 1994.

When talking about the postal service, Bowers speaks with pride usually reserved for branches of the military. She's quick to note that only U.S. armed forces employs more government workers.

Likewise, Bowers is quick to stamp out stereotypes associated with the job. "To me 'going postal' means being dedicated to your job and providing service to your customers," she said.

Grant to bolster police crime-fighting arsenal

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police is getting a nearly \$60,000 shot in the arm from the federal government to fight crime.

The money is from the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program and is the second such financial award the city has received. Last year, Farmington Hills police was granted \$48,984, which was matched by the city with \$5,443 taken from the drug forfeiture fund as required as part of the application process.

Under this second phase, the city will have to match 10 percent of the \$59,771 grant, which would be \$5,977 for a total of \$65,748. City council still has to formally accept the money and conduct a public hearing.

"We're pleased that this grant is coming through," Chief Bill Dwyer said. "The way it stands now, it's very difficult to be able

to get some of these really necessary and needed items without these types of grants because the budgets are tight."

As with the first grant, the department will use the money to buy equipment and crime prevention materials. Money from the previous grant helped pay for the mobile simulator used for officer training and will underwrite a new \$30,000 computerized crime watch system.

Grant money is allocated on the basis of crime statistics and population. U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Township, has backed giving more federal money to for crime prevention.

"These funds are vital to helping our police keep our communities safe," Knollenberg said in a written statement. "It will provide our communities and their police forces with the flexibility they need to best address their specific problems and concerns."

AGENDAS

Farmington Public Schools

Board of Education

489-3300

Schulman Building

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 17

Agenda items include:

■ A report about High School Proficiency Tests.

■ Consideration of an approval of a preliminary bond application.

■ Consideration of approvals of the 1997-98 budget and revisions to the 1996-97 budget.

■ Consideration of an approval to the agreement with Oakland Schools regarding distribution of PA 18 funds.

Farmington Hills City Council

City Hall, 474-6115

7:30 p.m. Monday, June 16

Agenda items include:

■ A public hearing for the consideration of a cost saving (Resolution # 5) for water main improvement for Ardmore Drive from 13 Mile Rd. to Firwood, S.A.D. C-284.

■ Consideration of the introduction of an ordinance to amend city

code regarding the regulation of cellular towers.

■ Consideration of the approval of water rates for 1997-98 and sewerage rates for 1997-98.

■ Consideration of the approval of a Cultural Arts Master Plan process.

■ Consideration of entering into a contract with Ad Edge Marketing to provide a plan for expanded summer use of Founders Sports Park and a study of dry floor activities for the ice arena.

■ Consideration of entering into executive session immediately following the regular meeting for a discussion about property acquisition.

Farmington City Council

City Hall, 474-5500

8 p.m. Monday, June 16

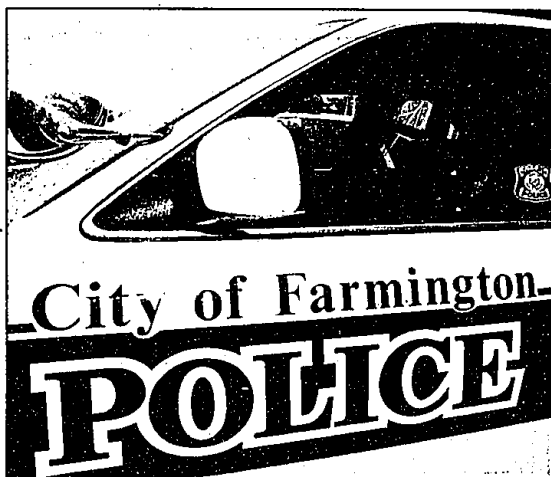
Agenda items include:

■ Amend city water and sewer rates.

■ Consider amending city's fee schedule.

■ Consider amending City Manager's agreement.

Police patrol:
Farmington Public Safety Officer
Jim Madigan shows the new Farmington police logo already on two of the department's six cars.



New logo, patch underscore Farmington's police business

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Public Safety Department is making some cosmetic changes to let people know it means business — especially when it comes police business.

That's why two patrol vehicles sport new logos with Farmington "police" written in white on a blue background and department uniforms feature patches with the words "police" embroidered on them.

The move is intended to cut down on confusion, said Gary Goss, Farmington Public Safety director.

Though most Farmington residents know public safety means both police and fire, the moniker may conjure up a different meaning to others.

"It's not a change in service at all," Goss said. "It's just that we're trying to provide a clear identification when we are in police mode so there is no misunderstanding."

■ 'It's not a change in service at all. It's just that we're trying to provide a clear identification when we are in police mode so there is no misunderstanding.'

Gary Goss

—Farmington Public Safety Director

Public safety departments are generally known in the state for providing both fire and police services. Public safety personnel members are sworn police officers as well trained firefighters and emergency technicians.

"There may be a few people in the community who are not clear on what public safety means," said Commander Dan Heller, "and the change on the patch might clarify our role for them."

"But I don't know of an instance when an officer's identity

was questioned due to the old patch."

On the East Coast, public safety officers are jail security and not sworn police officers. Some university campus security outfits also call themselves public safety departments.

The name has created confusion closer to home. Goss recalls one time when now retired Commander Chuck Leo was at a car wash when he struck up a conversation with a woman.

"She asked, 'How long have you been a security guard...?' Goss said.

Aside from an identity standpoint, the new patrol car logos have a practical use. The large white letters are reflective against the blue background, making it easier to see in the dark.

The shield logo on the department's four other patrol cars is not reflective. Those vehicles will eventually receive new logos.

The voice of public education

Retiring public school employees light the way for next generation

As Joan Gernaat enters retirement this summer, she finds herself reminiscing a lot about her 39 years of teaching and counseling.

She recalls the sixth-grade boy who hated reading when he entered her class, but loved it when he left. She gets teary-eyed about the young woman who came back after graduating to say "Thanks!" for inspiring her to teach. And, most of all, Joan remembers the countless "light bulbs" she saw go on when her students learned something new.

"I know it sounds silly," said Joan, who is now a counselor at West Middle School in Portage Public Schools. "But every year, I would see these little light bulbs go on for my students. And even if it was only one student, I knew when I saw that light bulb that I'd really reached that child. It just makes me all goose bumpy to think about it."

Like Joan, more than 7,000 other public school employees—teachers, bus drivers, custodians, secretaries and other support staff—are ending their careers in public education this year.

The number of retirements in public schools has increased each year of the past decade. And, at this rate, some experts predict that more than half of today's educators could exit the system by the turn of the century.

We will miss them—their experience, wisdom and stability they bring to our public schools.

The Michigan Education Association (MEA) salutes this year's retiring public school employees for dedicating their professional lives to turning on those light bulbs for

our children. Through their hard work, expertise, energy and enthusiasm, they have illuminated our communities and enriched our lives.

Experience is a powerful teacher. We thank our retiring public school employees for passing on to our younger educators the many lessons and ideas they've learned along the way.

They've taught those who are following in their footsteps such things as how to spot a passing educational fad when they see one, how to motivate, encourage and care about each child who walks through their doors.

They've helped new school employees adapt to and meet the changing needs of our increasingly diverse student population. And they've shown us by example how to be dignified and professional through the good times and the bad.

Public education will continue to face great challenges as we strive to prepare all children for the demands of the 21st century. And it won't be easy.

But our public school retirees, like Joan Gernaat, serve as beacons lighting the way for the next generation of public school employees.



Julius A. Maddox
MEA president



Michigan Education Association

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