

# O&E, radio host going live in talks with local guests

BY NICOLE STAFFORD  
STAFF WRITER

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers has teamed up with WXYT radio host Jimmy Barrett to present a series of town meetings broadcast live from local venues.

The gatherings will take place from 10 a.m. to noon the first Thursday of each month on WXYT-AM 1270. Each will spotlight the towns served by one of the O&E's 15 editions. The fast-paced format will create a forum for public debate on local issues and an opportunity for non-residents who tune in to learn more about the spotlighted cities, townships or villages.

"I think we're creating something a little unique here," said Doug Gondek, operations manager and program director at Southfield-based WXYT.

"It's a spotlight on the town. It's an opportunity to show one community to other communities," he said of the collaborative arrangement, entitled First Thursday Town Meeting with Jimmy Barrett.

In addition to Barrett, the program's panel will feature one of the O&E editors, serving as co-host, as well as community guests specially chosen to stimulate discussion before a "studio audience." The concept is intended to give local residents a chance to get to know their civic leaders and local newspaper editor — not to mention pressing community issues.

"Similar to the town square debates of old, the First Thursday Town Meeting with Jimmy Barrett is sure to stir discussion and debate about topics our readers and WXYT listeners care about — land use, traffic, property taxes, school programs, parks and recreation, entertainment and restaurants, neighborhoods, and interesting personalities," said Bob Sklar, managing editor of the O&E's Oakland editions. "We're delighted to team up with WXYT in an interactive project that focuses on what we do best — relate local issues of the day."

Since audience participants will be able to ask questions and offer views, it's hoped that the program generates lively and informative discussion. Barrett will invite call-in questions, ensuring that residents who weren't able to attend are able to share concerns, questions and ideas.

Observer & Eccentric promotions director Stacey Kim is working with local cable companies to encourage that each town meeting receives television coverage. "This is community involvement taking a different format," said O&E marketing director Rick Ficorelli. "We're bringing in issues of relevance to the community and giving members of the community a forum for discussion."



Jimmy Barrett  
WXYT Radio Host

and it gives us a chance to display our editorial excellence." With such extensive media coverage, it's hoped that each featured community will acquire a bigger voice and greater presence in the metro area. "It's an opportunity for members of the community, really, to design their postcard for their own town," Gondek said of the concept. The forum will not only be informative but also entertaining, Gondek predicted.

Conceptually, each guest panel will include four community leaders or activists who are well-versed in local issues and matters of interest. Discussion topics and guest lists will be developed jointly by O&E editors and WXYT. Anticipated guests include mayors, township supervisors, city managers, police

chiefs, school superintendents, small business owners and other civic leaders. Discussion topics will be suggested but dialogue will most likely be governed by each audience's questions, feedback and concerns. The composition of each guest panel and its interplay with the audience should influence the nature of the discussion, said Barrett in anticipation of the program's start.

The kickoff First Thursday Town Meeting with Jimmy Barrett is scheduled for Aug. 7 at the Rochester Chophouse, 306 Main Street, in downtown Rochester. Future programs will be broadcast live from Canton (Sept. 4), Farmington (Oct. 2) and Birmingham (Nov. 6).

The August guest panel in Rochester will include Rochester school board president Darlene Janulis, Oakland County Traffic Improvement Association president Frank Cardimen, Rochester Hills Mayor Kenneth Snell and Rochester Mayor Thomas Worth.

Tom Baer, community editor of the Rochester Eccentric, will co-host the show with Barrett. Information about that and the upcoming town meetings will be broadcast on WXYT and published in your hometown Observer or Eccentric. Residents who wish to be a part of the discussion are encouraged to contact the broadcast venue about seating availability prior to each town meeting.

For information about seating arrangements at Rochester's First Thursday Town Meeting with Jimmy Barrett, please call the Rochester Chophouse at (248) 651-2266.

# Industry bolsters OU lab

Oakland University recently dedicated a cutting-edge vehicle systems laboratory, another step forward in OU's ability to benefit industry and prepare work force-ready graduates.

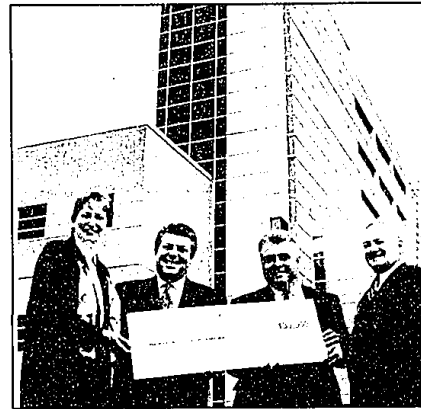
The General Dynamics Land Systems Virtual Vehicle System Simulation laboratory will focus on making and evaluating computer models of automotive systems such as engine controls. General Dynamics committed a grant of \$135,000 toward the lab's development.

This technology will reduce the time and cost of research and development, manufacturing and serviceability of vehicle systems, enabling engineers to evaluate their concepts much faster. Such technology is valuable to the military and automakers.

"The laboratory is another reason why Oakland's School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS) is the school of choice for the automotive industry," said Dagmar Cronn, vice president, Academic Affairs and Provost.

SECS Dean Michael Polis said the school is a leader also because it stays on top of industry trends with the input of SECS advisory board members from General Dynamics and other major corporations.

Arthur Veitch, president, General Dynamics Land Systems, said his company has many reasons for sponsoring the lab. "We have great respect for Oakland University as we have watched it grow and become a more integral part of the community," he said. "We believe Oakland University is just beginning to realize its exciting potential and gain a statewide reputation as one of Michigan's finest universities and best educational val-



New lab: Accepting a check from General Dynamics President Arthur Veitch (second from left) are Dagmar Cronn (left), Oakland University vice president of academic affairs, research engineer James Overholt, and Michael Polis, dean of OU's School of Engineering and Computer Science.

ment with Oakland University, dating back to 1982, which has produced many accomplishments." Veitch said General Dynamics is excited about its sponsorship, because it uses modeling and simulation technology extensively to design and develop armored combat vehicles.

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