

Ameritech sets \$2,000 reward

Ameritech is offering a \$2,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and indictment of those involved in an arson fire of a connection box in Farmington Hills.

Between 2:30 a.m. July 24, the connection box on the 25000 block of Drake Road appeared to have been deliberately set on fire. The fire left 300 customers without telephone service for several hours and caused \$15,000 damage.

Connection boxes are typically stand 3- to 4-feet high and contain wires essential for telephone service.

"It doesn't happen that often," said Sara Snyder, Ameritech spokeswoman. "Because we don't have any other information on this and it caused an inconvenience to our customers as well as \$15,000 damage, we thought we'd turn to the public and ask for their help."

Tipsters may remain anonymous. Ameritech will determine how the reward would be divided if more than one person gives information.

The reward is open to the general public and Ameritech employees until Dec. 31. Call 313-255-8370.

Help DDA shape town

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Farmington residents and businesses have their chance to help shape how the city's downtown will look in the early 21st century.

That public input will be sought by the Farmington Downtown Development Authority during its special meeting slated for 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 18, in the city council chambers.

"We'd like people to feel their thoughts and their ideas are welcome," said Judy Downey, executive director of the DDA. "That the DDA is interested in (them) as shoppers and residents."

Suggestions deemed well-thought out and worth considering will be weighed by John Grissim & Associates, the city's landscape architect and planner, said Farmington city manager Frank Lauffhoff following Tuesday morning's DDA meeting.

The input, if helpful, could wind up in the mix very quickly. At 8 a.m. Oct. 7, the DDA will meet to approve related

projects for fiscal 1998-99, subsequently recommending them to the city council for final OK. The council is slated to act on recommendations in November.

Grissim & Associates is developing the long-range plan for the central business district. It will include "beautification and infrastructure improvements that will improve the downtown" for at least the next decade, Lauffhoff said.

"Many live, shop and dine in the downtown area who could give an objective point of view," Downey explained. "It's the people that live it every day who have that eye. We hope they'll come forward."

According to Downey, the plan is a continuation of the commitment to downtown exhibited by the DDA and a blueprint for prospective merchants. She said the authority invested about \$1.6 million in bonds for a variety of streetscape improvements, all completed during the past five years or so.

"We're actively recruiting

businesses to move into the CBD (central business district)," Downey said. "We want to continue to grow, with planning designed to make it pedestrian friendly, aesthetically pleasing and safe."

Doing more to provide parking for merchants, and let them know it is available, is expected to be part of the Grissim plan.

"There is parking at the (Farmington) training center," Downey said, "but people aren't aware of it."

Downey said she didn't think additional parking areas could be wedged into the plan. "We have over 2,000 parking spaces in downtown and some of it isn't utilized, such as the training center and behind Farmer Jack."

Grissim's plan could help the DDA enhance the use of existing parking, she added.

The DDA approved \$5,000 for the long-range planning study. It will recommend council approve individual projects that can be done within budget on an annual basis, Downey said.

Scottish rite



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBSON

Authentic: Holly Leonard of Farmington Hills prepares to throw the haggis at the Highland Games Saturday at Greenmead Historical Village in Livonia. Contestants had to dip their hands into a bag of authentic Scotland peat before throwing from atop a scotch whisky barrel. Leonard threw 39 feet. Thousands of visitors enjoyed the fund-raiser for the St. Andrews Society of Detroit.

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