

Farmington Observer

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IN THE PAPER
TODAY

Cable TV Weekly, your guide to complete local cable television listings, takes on a new, larger format starting today. Published every Sunday, it will offer the same features you're familiar with but in an easier-to-read tabloid format. Please look for Cable TV Weekly in Section F of today's paper.

INDEX	
Arts & Leisure	C
Business & Finance	C1-4
Classified	E, G-J
Autos for sale	K1
Crossword	H4
Employment	J1
Home & Service Guide	K5
Index	J2
Real Estate	H1
Rentals	H6
Health & Fitness	E5
Malls & Mainstreets	B4-6
Movie Guide	D4
Road Watch	A5
Sports & Recreation	E
Taste	B1

Murderer gets max in Hills case

BY LARRY O'CONNOR AND DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITERS

The man who helped murder a mother and daughter in their Farmington Hills home two years ago got the maximum sentence Friday.

Calling it "the most heinous crime that I've ever tried," Oakland Circuit Judge Barry Howard sentenced George Tyrone Davis to 25-50 years for the two counts of second-degree murder and

10-20 years for arson. Davis had pleaded guilty in the second-degree murder case, but later tried to withdraw the plea. Judge Howard denied the plea change Friday, then proceeded with sentencing.

Joe Bovair, who flew in from Tacoma, Wash., for Friday's hearing, spoke on behalf of the family of his mother and sister, Louise Helen Bovair, 52, and Melissa Ann, 21, who were killed in their Kordakwood Street home which was set on fire Dec. 19, 1995. He expressed his anger at the killers

and asked for the maximum sentence. Then, he listened to Davis and his mother speak to the court.

"He apologized to us and our family and his mom also apologized and said we were in her prayers," Bovair said after the hearing Friday. "I can't say today that I accept it... but I appreciate it."

"Maybe someday me or my family will be able to forgive him," said Joe Bovair, a member of the U.S. Air Force who has returned to Michigan frequently to attend lengthy court pro-

ceedings.

Arthur Cayce, 25, of Farmington Hills had already been convicted of first-degree murder and is sentenced to life in prison. Court testimony showed it was Cayce's jealousy over the amount of time his former girlfriend was spending with Melissa that was the motive in the double homicide.

Davis, described as a friend and co-worker of Cayce, had also been charged with first-degree murder, but had

Please see MURDER, A2

Bunched at lunch



Busy time: Lunch hours at Lanigan Elementary School put kids in close quarters with each other, and with the condiment table.

Food for thought

Cramped, long lunches feed bond need

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

"Show them the cafeteria" could be an effective mantra for Farmington Public School District officials, trying to sell to the public reasons why they should approve a two-part, \$93.1 million bond proposal on Tuesday, Sept. 16.

Exhibit A is the cramped eating space at Lanigan Elementary School, where last year pupils sat at the same table where condiments were served. Space is marginally improved this year; only the condiments cover the table this year.

"We try to avoid it," said Principal Marva Turner, about kids and condi-

ments sharing a table. "But if you have children in close proximity to what you're serving... it's not the optimal situation. It could pose a health problem, but it hasn't yet."

There is another lunchroom example of why Turner hopes voters approve the combined proposals. During the first of four 30-minute sessions, nine youngsters typically sit on benches that are designed for eight.

"It gets tight," said Principal Marva Turner, looking into Lanigan's cafeteria, which is closer in size to a regular classroom. "And we have to go through with carts to sell snacks."

Also because of the lack of space, Turner worries that teachers and pupils lose valuable time because there are four lunch/recess periods

instead of the proffered three. For example, Turner said teachers could be spending more time preparing lessons or collaborating with colleagues — something that students would benefit from in the classroom.

All of those worries would disappear if the bond issues are approved. The \$28.1 million Proposal II includes approximately \$1.1 million worth of improvements at Lanigan. Foremost among them is the construction of a new gymnasium off the building's west end, thus enabling the existing gym to be turned into a more-spacious cafeteria. The current lunchroom would become a large meeting and instruction area with a myriad of potential uses.

Please see LUNCH, A2

Fiber optic network holds promise

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

A state-of-the-art, fiber optic network promises to help students in the Farmington Public School District point and click their way to success both in the classroom and in future careers.

Technology wiring is one of the marquee components of the Sept. 16 bond issue, a two-part package totaling \$93.1 million if both Proposal I and Proposal II are approved. According to district officials, the wiring of 30 buildings is the educational foundation for the decades to come, with everything else almost cosmetic by comparison. The package does not include the 3,200 new computers that were part of the list in the failed March bond issue election.

Fiber optics could last for 10 or 20 years, or longer, and accommodate an unlimited number of classroom computers, said Kathy Jones, the district's director of informational management.

But if the bond issue fails, progress and communication could get bogged down because of an overloaded system, she said. "We'll be out of capacity very soon with what we're doing."

Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent for business and finance, said it is better to overhaul the existing communications network sooner than later. She compared it to a long-overdue road-widening project.

"We see it coming," Cannon said. "We need the five-lane road, the expressway... We'll reach the point where we're kind of in gridlock and people will say, 'What did you do?'"

Cannon noted that it would be "very difficult, expensive" to install distributed wiring out of the general fund budget. "The best time to include this infrastructure, this

Please see FIBER OPTIC, A3

MEAP dip in science gets attention

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Farmington students' scores in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests improved in three of four areas they were tested on last March.

But it's the fourth category where scores dropped that is getting Superintendent Bob Maxfield's attention.

"I'm not happy with the eighth grade science scores," said Maxfield in point-blank fashion Friday.

In that category, just 21.1 percent of 856 students achieved the proficient level, compared to 27.8 percent in 1996. Farmington exceeded the state's average (17.5 percent proficient), but fell below districts such as Clarensville (23.9), Clarkston (24.4) and Ferndale (22.1).

The Farmington drop in eighth grade science performance followed county and state trends.

Performance, however, was up in all other areas in comparing 1996 to 1997:

- Fifth grade science: from 43.7 percent in 1996 to 54.8 percent proficient in 1997.
- Eighth grade writing: from 80.7 to 84.8 percent proficient.
- Fifth grade writing: from 84.9 to 89.7 percent proficient.

Another concern was the fluctuation of scores from one building to the next, though Maxfield said he needed more time to digest those scores.

"There were bigger gaps than I want to see between buildings," Maxfield said. "In some cases, there were some nice jumps from last year. But other (schools) have some real needs."

"Our message to staff continues to be that we expect every kid to be proficient" in the tested subjects. "We don't know if we can ever reach that point, but we can always try."

Carolyn Mahalak, the district's assessment coordinator, said parents need to keep the results in perspective.

"I think any test, national or state, is only one part of an overall picture of an individual's performance in school," Mahalak said. "... Day-to-day performance, in school, just as in life, is what really makes a difference and that's what parents and teachers are really looking at."

Mahalak said a full MEAP analysis was expected to be presented at the school board's meeting on Monday, Sept. 23.

District results trickled in later than in most other Oakland County districts, due to the United Parcel Service strike, Mahalak said.

Editor's note: The Observer will publish school-by-school MEAP scores on Thursday.

City tells neighbors, developer to talk

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills city officials want a developer and homeowners association to settle their spat by talking first and going to court second.

Representatives of Phoenix Land Development and Woodcreek Homeowners Association chatted, but are far from patching things up.

Both are embroiled in a dispute over the proposed 37-lot Hickory Oaks development in the southeast portion

of the Woodcreek area.

The developer stormed out of a settlement conference before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge John McDonald Wednesday after a representative of the homeowners' association insisted some of the proposed sites be widened.

"We thought we had an agreement with them," said Steven Schaefer of Phoenix Land Development. "When we into the (judge's) chambers, he (Woodcreek's Tom Morris) was talking about

something totally different than what we talked about before."

"Every time we turn around, it's something."

Farmington Hills City Council has called a special hearing 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 22, over the Planning Commission's tentative approval of the preliminary plat for the project. The council can agree or overrule the commission on the tentative preliminary plat approval.

If the two sides can reach agreement

before then, Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi said, "we'll cancel the hearing."

City Manager Daniel Hobbs suggested a similar sit-down approach in another squabble — this one between Phoenix Land Development and High Meadow residents over a proposed development on Orchard Lake between 12 Mile and 13 Mile. This case is different, a city official said.

"I think they (Phoenix and Wood-

Please see NEIGHBORS, A4

Mark your calendar; make our calendar

The Farmington Observer will host a publicity forum for community and local non-profit groups at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 18, in the meeting room of the Farmington Community Library, behind Farmington City Hall.

Members of the Farmington Observer staff will offer information about how to get your information into the newspaper, including press releases and photographs. Staffers will also discuss what we look for in news stories, how we decide to send a photographer to an event and more.

School boosters, neighborhood associations, club representatives and others are invited to attend. Anyone with questions may call Dave Varga at the Observer office at 477-5450.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Rocky road

State Rep. Andrew Raczekowski of Farmington Hills took a recent honor, but one that he probably wasn't too proud about.

The Associated Press' analysis of legislative driving records in the past seven years showed Raczekowski leads the list with 11 speeding tickets from 1991-1996, including one from Georgia. Besides the speeding citations, Raczekowski had one accident and one ticket for disobeying a traffic control device on his record.

All the tickets were issued before he was elected and all were paid.

"I was much younger, and I've learned my lesson," said Raczekowski. "As an elected official I have not had a single ticket."

Digging up the past

An historical look back at antique tools and utensils is on display at the Farmington Hills Historical Commission's exhibit case in Farmington Hills City Hall.

Louise McFarland, a member of the Farmington Hills Historical Commission, borrowed her husband's antiques to show present generations how their ancestors lived.

It will be on display through September.