

Farmington Observer



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THE WEEK AHEAD

Recycle time: Farmington Hills will pick up Christmas trees in the regular curbside trash collection this week.

MONDAY

Building on safety: Farmington City Council members will vote on proceeding with bids to renovate the city's public safety building at its meeting, 8 p.m. Jan. 5 at city hall.

TUESDAY

Senior tour: Check out the Costick Center's senior citizen programs at 10:30 a.m. Jan. 6. Call 473-1860 to register.

THURSDAY

Gathering: Cable TV is the main topic as Interagency Council meets at 7:30 a.m. Jan. 8 at the Longacre House.

INDEX

Arts & Leisure	D1
Calendar	B3
Classified Index	K3
Autos for sale	L1
Crossword	G8
Employment	K1
Home & Service Guide	L2
Real Estate	G5
Rentals	G7
Malls & Mainstreets	B4
Health & Fitness	E4
Movie Guide	D4
New Homes	G1
Oakland Digest	A6
Obituaries	A4
Police, fire calls	A4
Sports & Recreation	E1
Taste	B1

Oil company lawsuit drills Hills



BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

An oil exploration company that was turned down to drill in Farmington Hills has turned to the court for help. Farmington Hills City Council — responding to concerns of residents near the proposed site — denied West Bay Exploration's request for a permit to drill two well heads in the Nine

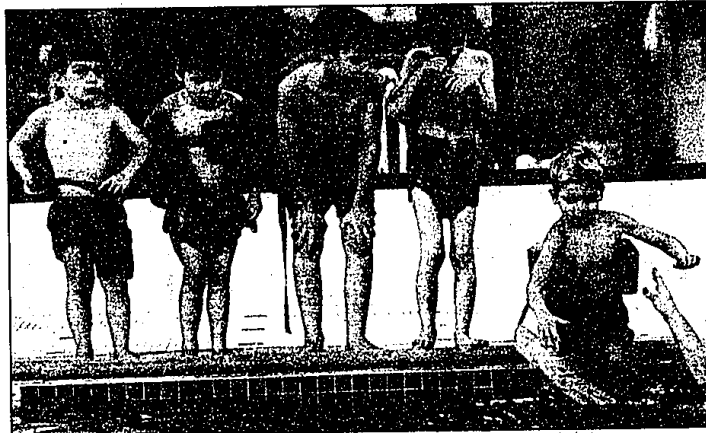
Mile/Haggerty Road area, citing worries about the potential release of hydrogen sulfide. West Bay officials want a judge to overrule the council's decision Dec. 15 in a lawsuit before Judge Nancy Grant in Oakland County Circuit Court. A hearing date has not been set yet. The exploration company met all city ordinances on the issue and concerns over hydrogen sulfide are unfounded, West Bay officials said. City officials disagree and say the

denial has strong legal backing. "We've done what we think is the right thing and I'm disappointed they are going to court," said City Manager Daniel Hobbs. "I don't think that will serve them well in the long term." West Bay wants the judge to order the city to issue drilling permits. If not, West Bay officials will ask the judge to rule this was an inverse condemnation — governmental taking of property. Then, they'd seek damages of \$40 million, which is the gross revenue they

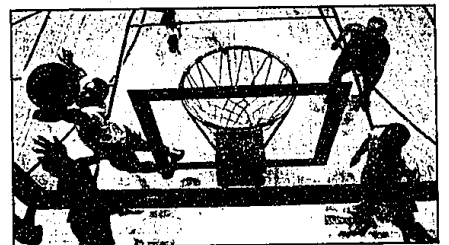
project two well heads would produce. "We don't want to earn our money this way," said Gary Gottschalk, West Bay vice president. "We don't want to file lawsuits. We want to produce oil and gas. That's how we make our livelihood." Refusal to grant a drilling permit is based on city code, which allows for a denial if there is a threat to public health, safety and welfare, Hobbs said. Hydrogen sulfide is a toxin and a

Please see OIL, A2

Taking a 'Y' break



Ready, set, jump: Kids of all ages found fun and frivolity on the last day of 1997 at the Farmington Family YMCA. Above, it's swimming class, where youngsters practiced jumping in the pool. Ty Bouvents, 4, takes the first jump, with the on-deck lineup being, from left, Gregory Ganoff, 3, Devin Daugherty, 4, Chase Daugherty, 7, and Paul Doerr, 5. Meanwhile, in photo at right, two youngsters in the YMCA's holiday break camp hold their breath under water: George Ganoff, 8, left, and Jimmy Allor, 10. And below, to show that adults found time for a fun, competitive workout, too, we provide a behind-the-scenes view of the adult basketball game in the gymnasium.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRIAN MITCHELL

Stores report 'good,' 'great' season

BY RICHARD PEARL
STAFF WRITER



With comments ranging from "good" to "great," business people in Farmington and Farmington Hills are generally satisfied with the just-completed holiday season.

A random survey Wednesday by the Observer of area merchants and executives showed while business wasn't necessarily phenomenal, it was far from depressing. Even two downtown Farmington bookstore operators — Borders Outlet and Books Abound — who are regarded as being in direct competition with each other were happy.

"We did very well, but not for the reason people would expect," said Books Abound owner Skip Rosenthal. "About half our business is being done now on the Internet, and not from just in Michigan, but around the world."

"I shipped one order to Turkey yesterday, three days before that it was Sweden. Books that normally sit here are moving very nicely."

He said the new Borders Outlet just down the street on Grand River "didn't affect us at all because there are a lot of things they don't have."

Hasan Jafri, assistant manager at the Borders Outlet, which opened its doors only Sept. 27, said the store "had some numbers to meet and it looks like we did quite well."

"But it's still not clear if it will be enough for the Borders Corporation to budget more" such outlet stores, he added, noting the experimental nature of the shops.

He said more people are doing outlet shopping this year "and you could see it here as well." He said children's books and stuffed animals, which the

Please see STORES, A2

Gun-toting woman robs credit union

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police and the FBI are investigating a credit union heist in which a woman demanded money, revealed part of a semiautomatic weapon and walked away with \$6,500.

At 2:50 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 30, Credit Union One employees said the woman went up to the second counter at the 13 Mile Road office and told the clerk to put all the money on the counter. "I'm serious," she told the male clerk, turning her body to show the bottom of gun.

She took the cash and fled on foot east on 13 Mile toward Orchard Lake.

A similar armed robbery involving a female bandit took place at a credit union on Haggerty and Eight Mile.

The woman involved matches the same description in the Novi holdup: A black female 5 feet 8 inches tall with a medium build. She was wearing a black knit cap, black leather coat, black jeans and shoes.

Before leaving, the female bandit placed three \$1 bills on the counter. Police took the money to check for fingerprints.

Security cameras were on during the robbery, police reports said.

"We're going to compare that from the one from Novi," said Richard Murphy, Farmington Hills police assistant chief. "We haven't done that yet because they're being developed. We'll get that through the FBI."

Bank or credit union robbery is a federal offense, which is why the FBI also investigating.

New year's wishes carry high hopes for '98

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The new year is upon us and people in Farmington and Farmington Hills have high hopes.

Some want 1998 to bring Farmington and Farmington Hills the same kind of success that was realized in 1997. Others have bold new ideas for the area, too. How does a "Main Street" for Farmington Hills or a tattoo parlor

sound?

From community and school leaders, merchants and residents, following is a compilation of wishes for '98:

■ **Eve Cinato, district manager, Village Shoe Inn in downtown Farmington:** "I wish I could get some employees. It's so hard to find help. All the stores around here have 'Help Wanted' signs. Other than that, I'm real happy here."

■ **Vicki Eaton, owner, Downtown Farmington Travel:** "I wouldn't mind seeing more people down in the Farmington area shopping."

■ **Deb Watson, owner, Deb's Crafts in downtown Farmington:** A cancer patient who has two more chemotherapy sessions scheduled, she wanted to thank those who kept her in their thoughts and prayers during 1997 and hoped that '98 will get her

over the medical hump. Another wish is that customers "continue to patronize my store."

■ **Sonia Littrikoska, Farmington Bakery, downtown:** "Got more businesses that will bring more people to Farmington."

■ **Nadia Hosking, manager, The Yellow Durban, downtown Farmington:** "I'd like to see something

Please see WISHES, A2

Talk about spending money

The Farmington School Board's finance committee will meet at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday to begin discussions about how to spend an estimated \$9.5 million in money from the recent Durant court settlement.

The meeting is open to residents. School board President Linda Enborg added that a full public hearing on the topic will take place in the upcoming months, but that it has not yet been scheduled.

Farmington was among the Michigan school districts that will benefit from a Michigan Supreme Court settlement in the so-called Durant case, which claimed state officials mandated programs

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without paying for them. The money is due to be paid in April.

The board meets in the Lewis Schulman Administration Building on Shinawasse, just east of Power Road.

Oh recycled tannenbaum

The city of Farmington Hills announces it will be

composting any Christmas trees left at the curb the week of Jan. 5.

Trees should be left at the curb on your regular garbage day — which is regular this week for the first time in two weeks.

Not at the corner any more

Warren's Country Corner will move from its corner perch at Farmington and Alta Loma after years in that downtown Farmington site.

The store's country collection will move to the Village Commons man on Grand River and will be renamed Warren's Village Store. State Farm Insurance will move to the former country corner store.