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going to go." Though the flames are overhead, the couch combusts if almost on cue. At Rebtzy's urging, an attempt is made to stand up in the blanket of smoke but the blast furnace-effect sears the face and quickly forces a person back onto the floor. "Imagine if you didn't have this equipment on and you stood up in that," Rebtzy said afterward. "You're cooked." When the informo extends to the doorway, Rebtzy ushered non-firefighting personnel outside. Flames and smoke are pouring out two front windows

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month investigation, which started in Southfield when police there had a group under surveillance for gambling. The group disappeared, but the ring re-emerged recently in Farmington Hills, prompting Southfield police to get a search warrant. Farmington Hills police had the home under surveillance most of Sunday, Dwyer said. Southfield, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield and Michigan State Police conducted the raid around 8 p.m. Those arrested were ranging in age from 32-55, with 12 from Farmington Hills and four from Southfield. Two Livonia residents and one from West Bloomfield were also arrested. They were taken to the Farmington Hills police department, ticketed and released. Frequenting an illegal gaming house is a misdemeanor and, if convicted, includes a fine of \$500 and 90

by now. "It's five minutes; this is when we arrive," he said. Under the supervision of safety and command personnel, the blaze is brought under control. Smoke billows out of the downstairs as firefighters clear the air in the living room. Their work is not done as flames alight from an attic. Afterward, the two firefighters who met the fire head on are ecstatic.



Decked out: Reporter Larry O'Connor shows off the latest in protective wear.

"It gives them confidence," Kish said.

FHS troupe takes to stage in 'Anything Goes'

Six Farmington High School students have starring roles in the upcoming Cabaret rendition of the Cole Porter musical, "Anything Goes." Performances are scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 5, Friday, Feb. 6 and Saturday, Feb. 7 in the FHS auditorium. According to drama teacher Leanne Walter, who coordinated the effort with drama teacher Richard Burgess, the show is a "love story" that develop on an Atlantic Ocean steamer traveling between England and New York City. Walter said six students have main leads, Stephanie Batkic, Andrea Campbell, Matt Gwynn, Kelley Oxley, Nick Ward and Kim Yoder. Tickets are now on sale at the high school. They are \$8 for adults and \$7 for students. For more information, call (248) 489-3456.

Tax from page A1

conomic Growth Authority (MEGA) program to cut the cost of doing business here as compared to another state. Council members, Bosch, state and county officials discussed the issue at a study session before the regular meeting. Robert Bosch is considering a move to Indiana where it's estimated to be \$40 million cheaper to do business, state officials said. So far, MEGA has granted tax breaks to 38 corporations to keep them taking jobs out of state. Bosch would like to be No. 39. City, state and Bosch officials are up against a tight deadline. The council needs to make a decision by Feb. 9 in order for the MEGA to consider Bosch for credits. "What we're looking for here is a partnership," said Al Accoves, Michigan Jobs Commission business development deputy director. Council members could agree to a tax abatement of \$400,000 for six years. County, community college and school taxes would make up the remaining \$1.5 million. Bosch already pays \$700,000 annually in taxes, including \$151,000 to Farmington Hills. Or, the city could waive fees and permits that would total \$1.1 million. "It makes no difference," said Hans Weckerle, Bosch executive vice president. "We need something that qualifies us for MEGA. Whatever is good for the city and qualifies us for MEGA is good for us." Alternatives suggested by Bosch include waiving permit fees totaling \$100,000-\$150,000; the city building a retention pond worth \$280,000; being exempt from the tree replacement program, \$300,000; water main loop, \$250,000; and roadway for the loop, \$100,000. A tax abatement makes more financial sense, council members said. The city would recoup \$100,000-\$150,000 alone from permits. "This is getting simpler from a financial standpoint," Sever said, "even though I'm principally against tax abatements." From that stand, though, one council member is not willing to budge. Councilwoman Nancy Bates said a company's incentive to stay is the city's quality of life: schools, services and workforce. It's up to the state to deal with the cost disparity of doing business here - not the city, Bates added. "I don't want Bosch to leave, but I can't according to my principles support this... I don't think we can call it anything else but corporate welfare, and I think it's wrong," Bates said. Bosch officials admit the \$1.5 million isn't the driving force, but the \$30-\$40 million in tax credits over 20 years is the key. After being here since 1982, the company would like to stay, Bosch officials said. "Farmington Hills was the preferred site, we just have to make up the cost differential," said Luke Baer, Bosch vice president.

Hills eyes tax breaks if ...

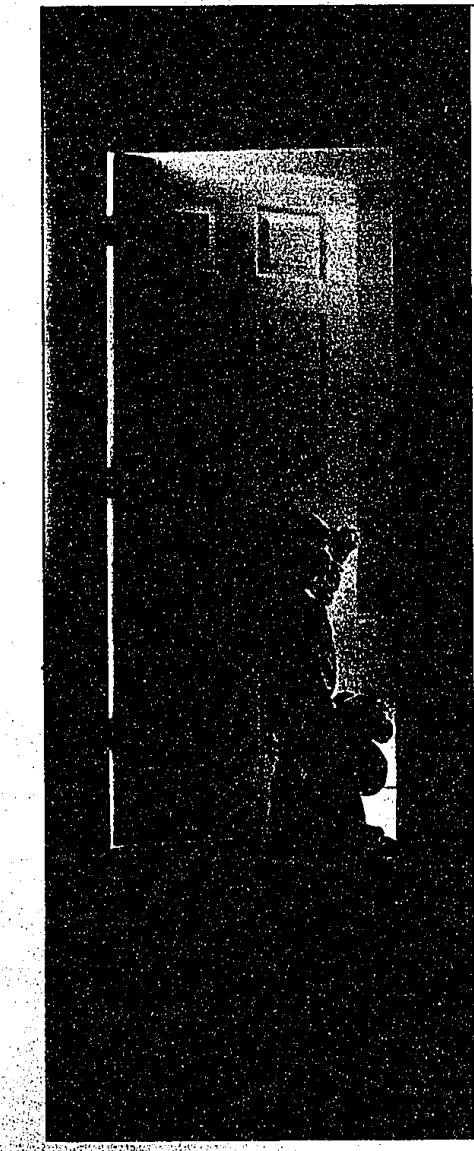
BY LARRY O'CONNOR STAFF WRITER

Tax abatements are to city council members what peanut butter on saltines are to a Martha Stewart dinner party: They think they're above all that. More so, they've been dead set against them. As businesses continued to be lured to other states and even local communities through tax breaks, Farmington Hills may have to lower itself into the fray. At Saturday's goals setting session, city council members discussed tax abatements. Council members Terry Sever and Vicki Barnett suggested tax breaks be considered if: ■ Federal or state money is involved. ■ Residents do not suffer any financial loss and money abated is recouped through building up the tax base. ■ And, the business has been a longtime member of the community. Having federal or state contributions is a key, Sever said. "Someone is going to get that money; I'd rather see a business in our community get that money as opposed to another business somewhere else," Sever said, "even though it's against my philosophy that we shouldn't grant abatements at all." Council member Nancy Bates said such a policy is establishing a price and goes against the city's precedent of not granting them. The city, though, has given at least two tax breaks in the past. "We either believe what we've said or we didn't," Bates added. The fear is once an abatement is granted, a "Pandora's box" is opened and other corporations will ask. "We need guidelines before we say 'yes' or 'no,'" Sever said. "I think there is public credibility here." In the Bosch case, it's not the corporation seeking the city's help as much as the state's Jobs Commission looking to keep one of its own. "The only reason I'm considering this is Bosch's strong commitment to the community," Barnett said, "and its willingness to expand and willingness to put its money where they people are."

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