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THE WEEK AHEAD

SUNDAY

Line starts here: Line dancing lessons are offered starting today 7:45-8:45 p.m. at The Longacre House.

MONDAY

Web Intrigue: Readers can discover the large resource of titles available on the World Wide Web 7-8:30 p.m. at the Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile.

TUESDAY

Arms race: Providence Medical Center, 30055 Northwestern, has an immunization clinic 4-8 p.m. All shots are free, but there is a \$5 facility fee.

ARTS & LEISURE

'Howdy' duty: The Farmington Neighbors Club meets 11:30 a.m. at Glen Oaks Country Club on 13 Mile. Call 474-3760 to make reservations.

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Teens: Let us skate



as of Tuesday, it probably won't be the fountain of youth.

A skateboarding ban for the central business district is expected to be enacted during Tuesday's 8 p.m. city council meeting.

"We're here to show we want to skateboard, and they should allow us to skateboard," said 15-year-old Kline, among many Farmington High School

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Joe Kline and more than 30 skateboarding enthusiasts Friday afternoon rallied around the Downtown Farmington Center fountain. But

students attending the rally, organized by a youth group Newera '98. "...I don't think it's right. We're not getting into trouble. We're here having fun."

Kline's 11-year-old brother, Steve, summed up his feelings about the ban this way. "If we're not doing this, what are we supposed to do?"

"Skateboarding has gotten negative press," said another FHS student, Beverly Brown, 16. "People think we're causing problems. There are police all around here and nobody's getting into trouble."

Not everybody sees it that way. Among concerned observers during the rally were Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss and Ron Oglesby, president of the city's Downtown

Development Authority.

"If it's a sport, it doesn't belong in a congested area," said Goss. "We wouldn't allow them to play football out here."

If they wanted to do it safely, they'd have helmets on, knee pads on. Do you see any of that here?"

Personal safety is just one concern. Others include the inconvenience to customers, liability if someone gets hurt because of a collision or spill, the potential of lost business for merchants and property damage.

Evidence of the latter encircled the empty fountain. Four of five wooden benches have the front slats cracked, broken or just plain beat up. Goss and Oglesby said skateboarders primarily cause that damage, by jumping up onto

The right to roll: Farmington HS junior Russell Fertig speaks to the group of at least 30 teenagers, declaring the right to skate board in the downtown area. Above left, Farmington High freshman Justin Firman skateboards on the curb at the downtown shopping center fountain.

STAFF PHOTO BY SEASON LEMLEY

Decision time

Farmington City Council meets at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 17, to decide on banning skateboards in downtown Farmington's central business district and private property. The civil infraction would bring a warning the first time, and carry a fine of up to \$100.

the front of the benches.

"We keep replacing these benches," lamented Oglesby, "because they keep getting destroyed. That cost is coming

Please see BAN, A2

Buying land key to parks system master plan

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills residents will have one more say in how and where they'll play during the next decade.

The city's Parks and Recreation Department is holding a public hearing 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, on its recently devised 10-year master plan. The session takes place in City Hall Council Chambers, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

The voluminous 67-page document charts how the department intends to add programs while it improves and

keeps existing ones.

A hearing is required in order for the Planning Commission to adopt the plan, which is must be filed when applying for state grants.

The master plan is available at the Department of Special Services, City Clerk's Office and both Farmington community libraries.

"The public is invited to look at it and give their input on the document," said Dan Potter, Special Services director.

A key aspect in the \$19.8 million action plan is \$1.3 million allotted to buy land for new park sites.

While development continues in the northwest portion of the city, there are no schools or parks there. "There's a lot of pressure (for parks) in the northwest quadrant," Potter said.

Also, the older southeastern area is lacking when it comes to parks.

Since 1995, the city has bought 37 acres at Founders Park on Eight Mile; Soccer/Soccer on Halsted and 12 Mile; William Tyndale College, 12 Mile and Halsted; and the William Costick Activities Center, 11 Mile Road.

Residents also want more unstructured parkland - such as bike paths and small neighborhood parks -

according to results of a survey.

A questionnaire was sent to all residents and four public hearings took place as part of the two-year process to put the plan together.

As a result, the Farmington Road bike path will be extended from Nine Mile to Eight Mile and then going west to Founders Sports Park. The city of Farmington has agreed to help develop a link from 10 Mile to Nine Mile.

If money is available, a bike route will be built from Farmington Road, along eastbound Nine Mile to Inkster Road, which would connect with Southfield.

Still ticking?

30-foot clock tower idea blew up once before

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The idea of erecting a 30-foot clock tower at Grand River-Farmington Road ticked off much of the Farmington community when it was proposed in 1992. Six years later, the concept is again being discussed by officials.

Historian Dick Carvell still doesn't think much of it.

"I have a problem remarking established corners," said Carvell, of the Farmington Historical Commission, referring to the Farmington Masonic Temple corner. "...And a big tower like that doesn't fit with my conception of a historical-type downtown."

But it does fit with landscape architect John Grissim's 10-year plan for

downtown Farmington.

One of 12 projects proposed by Grissim/Metz Associates to the Downtown Development Authority is putting up the clock tower, probably 30 feet tall, to make the authentic statement about downtown. It would be the highlight of a pedestrian-friendly project including fountains and brick pavers.

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said Grissim "looked at that corner and said 'That's a focal point for downtown. What are you going to do to make it that?'" Grissim's ultimate take was to include a clock tower, despite the previous controversy.

Carvell, who hasn't seen Grissim's drawings for the corner, is skeptical.

"Focal point? I don't know. For me, that corner is already enough of a focal

point. I don't see putting another gimmick there. I don't know how many focal points you need," Carvell said.

Just a concept

The clock tower envisioned by Grissim would be part of an enclosed structure, complete with a "fountain on the inside and plantings on the outside," with plenty of room for pedestrians, Lauhoff said. It also would be consistent with the architectural flavor of downtown, which is rich in history.

Currently, pedestrians can walk along the perimeter of the Masonic grounds at Farmington-Grand River.



Artist's look: This rendering shows the tower that would stand at Farmington and Grand River, near the Masonic Temple.

Putting a clock tower in Grissim's strategic plan doesn't mean anything. Lauhoff emphasized, other than it is an idea that could be realized in the future - many years down the road, if then. He said the Masonic project is

Please see CLOCK TOWER, A4

Cute, pampered pet

Cheryl Abel wants us to believe she doesn't go overboard on her dog.

Barney, a 4-year-old chocolate Labrador, has a choice of three Velcro-to-the-collar outfits - like the shirt/le combo in the picture at right, which helped him win a Valentine's Day pet photo contest.

"He has a Fourth of July stars and stripes collar and he's got a reindeer collar for Christmas. I don't go overboard," Abel said.

Abel admits that Barney's doghouse does have a



Barney

FARMINGTON FOCUS

heated mattress pad and she has hung an 11-by-17 shrine-sized photo of him in her office at Walled Lake Middle School, where she is student assistance coordinator.

Eventually, Abel confesses: "He's spoiled rotten. He's probably sleeping in my bed right now."

The photo of Barney, who lives in Commerce Township, was chosen the winner of The Farmington Area Community Women's first annual Valentine Pet Photo Contest. In all, 50 pet photos were entered, with the entry fees all donated to the Oakland County Animal Control Department.

Help honor someone good

Unselfish volunteers - those people who give just a little bit more, lend a helping hand, serve on a club or committee that does good or improve life in our community - deserve some recognition.

If you know someone who fits into that category, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Commission on Children, Youth & Families wants to honor him or her during Volunteer Recognition Night.

Send entries by March 31 with the name, address and a short comment on why the person deserves the honor to Commission on Children, Youth & Families, Attention: David Justus, 28600 11 Mile, Suite 102, Farmington Hills 48336.

Winners will be lauded during Volunteer Recognition Night at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 22, at the William Costick Center.

