

New director appointed for Farmington chamber

Carleigh Flaherty will be the new president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Flaherty, 25, has been executive director of the Canton Chamber of Commerce since July of 1996. She begins her duties June 1 at the Farmington area chamber, which is the third largest in the greater Detroit area.

Flaherty will replace Maria Esposito, who accepted a position as director of lifelong learning at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial. Esposito's last day was April 28.

"This is a good opportunity professionally for me. It's a larger organization with 720 members and a larger staff (of five)," Flaherty said.

"The Farmington area has tremendous diversity in its business community. Farmington being home to many family-based businesses and retail with a downtown ... and Farmington Hills being headquarters to large corporations," she said.

Originally from Seattle, Wash., Flaherty and her husband came to Michigan after he received a position as a mechanical engineer for firm in Troy. They live in Berkley.

An English major at the University of Washington, she was planning a career in education when she became a chamber intern during her junior and senior year. "It really lit my fire," she said. "I decided I wanted to work with business," she said.

Flaherty served as community and government relations manager for the Southwest King County Chamber of Commerce, which served a suburban tri-city area outside of Seattle. She also served as interim general manager before leaving for Michigan.

Historical commission goes from 7 to 9

The role of the Governor Warner mansion is expanding and so to - more than likely - is the Farmington Historical Commission that has a hand in running it.

During last Monday night's Farmington City Council meeting, a resolution was introduced to expand the commission from seven to nine members. The resolution was approved and probably will be officially approved at one of the council's upcoming meetings.

According to Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff, having an expanded commission in place makes good sense, particularly now, after a long list of recommendations for the historic house was presented by the Historical Museum Development Committee.

Among those recommendations - designed to promote the Warner home as an educational and community anchor for Farmington and Farmington Hills - is changing the Grand River building's name to "The Governor Warner Mansion ... home of Farmington history."

The city council is currently deciding whether to implement any of those recommendations during fiscal year 1998-99.

"As more things come along to do and more work is involved down there," said Lauhoff following Monday's meeting, "a few more people would always be helpful."

Several people have already expressed interest in joining the commission, Lauhoff said.

Longtime commission member Dick Carvell, who was also part of the Historical Museum Development Committee, sounded cautious about whether a nine-member commission would help to better operate the mansion on a day-to-day basis.

"There's been times we've needed the extra help," Carvell

said. "Whether this is going to get it for us, I'm not sure. Theoretically, if you get more people and more talents, it should help. We shall see."

Whenever the council decides on a specific plan of action for the museum, there should be some revenue to support it coming in from the Mobil gas station at Grand River-Drake.

At Monday night's meeting, gas station owner Jack Staszak presented his plan to earmark one penny per every gallon sold on one Tuesday each month to the Warner Mansion.

On other Tuesdays of the month, that money goes to Longacre Elementary School in the Farmington district.

"It'll be steady income," Staszak said to council members. "It won't be a fortune. But it should help."

Mayor Mary Bush applauded Staszak, who is planning a May 30 customer appreciation day at the gas station.

"I think it's wonderful that businesses give back to the community," Bush said. "That's what it's all about."

The council intends to put the money into a fund for special, specific projects, so that it is not frittered away.

"It's a great contribution," Lauhoff said. "It's nice to see ... This is the tip of the iceberg as far as the ability of the community to fund things that are important to the community, such as our heritage, the museum."

Lauhoff said he thinks other local businesses will step up, after the council decides how to proceed with the committee's recommendations.

"It's a nice gesture on their part," Carvell said about Mobil, "if they (city officials) earmark it for something special."

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accident one block west of Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills emergency vehicles would have to travel six miles to Telegraph and loop back.

"With that solid barrier, you cannot turn around," said Farmington Hills fire Chief Richard Marinucci. "Southfield has the same problem."

Two years ago, the city of Southfield worked with the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments and MDOT to put a justification report together, which was approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

That would allow for a "half interchange" where motorists would exit eastbound at Franklin and enter onto westbound I-696, said Don Gross, Southfield Community Development director.

"Since then we've been trying to work with MDOT and they haven't been too responsive in proceeding, whether it's due to a lack of funds or having too much on their plate," Gross said.

For years, there has been talk of an additional exit on I-696. One long since scrapped idea included having one between Drake and Farmington roads.

"Sometimes it's just that, just rhetoric," said Lt. Dennis Green, Farmington Hills police Traffic Bureau. "Meanwhile, the problem keeps growing at 12 Mile and Orchard Lake."

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