

## Market pressure Tell landlord we need a grocer

**D**owntown Farmington needs a grocery store.



If there was ever any doubt that the slightly run-down, somewhat tattered Farmer Jack store in the Downtown Center Mall parking lot holds a place of great value in the community, it was dispelled in the last week or so, after word got out that the store would close later this month.

We've had calls, letters and visitors in the Observer office to talk about the important role this store plays in the city of Farmington. Nearly four dozen or so residents showed up at the last Farmington City Council meeting—a gathering that rarely draws half of that.

The folks were united in wanting to keep a market in town, though some prefer to keep Farmer Jack while others want a new grocery store. They all wanted to know what the city can do to help them.

Farmer Jack seems to be gone, that's for sure. Employees were told the store would be closed on June 27, meaning they received only 30 days notice. With such a short timeframe before Farmer Jack is out, it seems futile to try to convince A&P (which owns Farmer Jack) to change its mind and re-open the store.

But all isn't lost. The effort to get the landlord, Kimco Realty, to replace one grocery store with another is well-stocked with items that we can only hope will be fruitful. Consider:

1. The Downtown Center Mall is full and thriving. Both of those haven't always been common situations in recent years. Credit the booming economy; credit the \$700,000 makeover that Kimco brought to the mall; and credit the recent introduction of national

name retailers (Starbucks and Borders Books Outlet) with making the shopping center a desirable site.

2. Farmer Jack still has one store in town. The bigger, newer Nine Mile/Farmington location ensures that A&P isn't going to just board up the downtown store and wait out the rest of its two-year lease with Kimco—if for no other reason than it doesn't want to thumb its nose at a community where it still hopes to do business.

3. City officials are on your side. Farmington officials have pledged to do their part, both before and behind the scenes to help keep a grocery store in downtown Farmington.

4. Downtown residents are riled about this. The more noise that you make—through petitions, letters, telephone calls, etc.—to Kimco, the better the chances they'll get us a store. As City Manager Frank LaHoff said, "Citizen involvement can make it happen."

There is little doubt that a downtown grocer serves much of our older population, especially the Farmington Place senior adult complex and others who live downtown. For many of them, a store within walking distance serves to ensure their independence. Other people who came to or live in Farmington for the cozy, hometown atmosphere also rely on having a grocery store within walking or biking distance, as do people who work in town.

Farmington doesn't need another discount store or another clothing. A downtown grocery store helps maintain the small-town vibrancy that keeps Farmington a desirable place to live and work.

To contact the leasing agent, address your letter to: Frank Descenzo, Kimco Realty Corporation, Four Commerce Park Square, 23200 Chagrin Blvd., Suite 445, Beachwood, Ohio 44122. Or fax comments to: (216) 895-7220.

## Chase ruling cuts police liability

The story is sadly becoming a staple on the 11 o'clock news. Two young men were killed Friday night when they crossed paths with a police chase in Clarkston. Their car—not involved in the pursuit—was broadsided as it exited I-76 at Sasabaw Road by the fleeing driver.

Similar incidents occur monthly in southeast Michigan, with a statewide total of 110 deaths resulting from police chases between 1990 and 1996, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association. Michigan has the sixth highest total for the time period, NHTSA figures show.

The U.S. Supreme Court last month practically made sure those numbers won't be decreasing any time soon. In a troubling decision, the court ruled unanimously on May 26 that police can't be held responsible for injuries caused by high-speed chases—even to bystanders—unless their actions "shock the conscience" of the community.

The ruling means that simple negligence by law enforcement agencies isn't enough to make them liable for damages resulting from high-speed chases. In order to collect, victims must show police either broke the law or completely and knowingly ignored the consequences of their actions.

The case, County of Sacramento v. Lewis, involved a fatal chase that began when a Sacramento County, Calif., sheriff's deputy took off after a motorcyclist who failed to stop for a city police officer. The motorcyclist had a 26-year-old passenger, Phillip Lewis. The chase, which lasted 75 seconds and reached speeds of 100 mph, ended when the deputy crashed into the motorcyclist, killing the passenger.

Lewis' parents sued the deputy, the sheriff's department and the county for damages. The case was moved to federal court and thrown out at the district level, with judges ruling that the deputy had the same immunity generally extended to police officers who

have not broken the law. However, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals held that the plaintiffs could recover damages if they showed the deputy acted with "deliberate indifference," a lower standard.

The Supreme Court effectively reinstated the earlier rulings. The court's trend in recent years has been to give police wide latitude in how they pursue their mission.

Law enforcement agencies in our area all have written guidelines on when to initiate pursuit and when to terminate. Canton's general policy, for example, says that a pursuit is justified "only when the response or immediate pursuit outweighs the level of danger or potential danger to the public. It shall be recognized that discontinuance of an emergency response or a pursuit may represent the best course of action..." the policy states.

But the Supreme Court has raised the liability bar so high that police have little incentive not to initiate pursuit. With some cases already questionable, we wonder whether officers will throw caution to the wind every time a suspect refuses to stop or takes off after being pulled over.

Invariably, law enforcement officials point to the fact that fleeing criminals bear the brunt of responsibility in such cases. A safe society demands that we give police high levels of discretionary power, they argue. "If we ever reach the point that merely turning on the lights puts the officer at fault, nobody will ever get chased," said Sacramento County Sheriff Glen Craig, referring to the court's decision. "Then you'll have a society in which the only people against whom the law will be enforced are those who voluntarily comply."

The Observer recognizes the need for officers to enforce the law, even zealously when called for. But such enforcement shouldn't come without consequences. A safe society also demands that those responsible pay for their mistakes.

### TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

40 YEARS AGO - JUNE 12, 1958

Two Farmington school board incumbents won re-election from a field of six candidates. Top four vote-getters were only 70 votes apart. Douglas P. Hominal and Patricia Dates won three-year terms. The story noted that: "Only 2,319 votes were cast in the election. This is less than 21 percent

of the total number of registered voters in the school district."

25 YEARS AGO - JUNE 12, 1973

Farmington school voters elected Emma Mackinnon and Gary Lichtman to the school board, ousting incumbent Kenneth Perrin.

2 YEARS AGO - JUNE 11, 1996

Voters elected Priscilla Brouillette and re-elected Joe Svoike to school board seats, besting two others. Turnout was 3 percent.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

#### QUESTION:

"What do you think you'll be doing in 10 years?"

We asked this question at Kenbrook Elementary as students began working on items for a time capsule they will bury this fall.



"After being so involved in raising my kids, it's hard to imagine I'll be in the empty nest stage of my life."  
Kim Elliott  
Kenbrook parent



"Probably getting out of college. I want to be a teacher."  
Caitlin McPherson  
Kenbrook fifth grader



"I'll be finishing my last year of college. I hope my family's okay and I hope I have a boyfriend."  
Allison Lott  
Kenbrook fifth grader



"I might just be getting out of college. I'll probably be up north and probably getting married."  
Mike Wasiko  
Kenbrook fifth grader

### LETTERS

#### League didn't interview

**R**egarding the June 4 Farmington Observer article on the Farmington school board race, the League of Women Voters Oakland Area did not interview the candidates, but rather sent them a questionnaire to which they all responded. We published their responses in a voter guide which was made available to the libraries, city hall, district schools, and activity center. Your paper ran a notice about their availability on May 31.

You correctly stated that the League of Women Voters did not endorse any candidates. The League never supports nor opposes any candidate for political office. That is and has been our policy since our founding in 1920. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. Voter guides are one means we use to provide information for voters.

Ann F. Wettlaufer  
president, LWVOA

#### Hills honored Hawks

**I** was glad to see in the May 31 edition of the Farmington Observer a report that Congressman Knollenberg had recognized Harrison High School's championship football team with a statement inserted in the Congressional Record.

The story, however, was not accurate in stating that this was the first governmental recognition for the team. Back on Jan. 19, I issued a proclamation on behalf of the city council honoring the accomplishments of the Harrison Hawks football team.

Coach Herrington and three of his football players accepted the proclamation on behalf of the team. The proclamation, among other statements, set aside Jan. 20 in Farmington Hills as Harrison Hawks day. In addition, I attended the first game of the playoffs and the championship game in the Pontiac Silverdome.

Aldo Vagnozzi, mayor  
City of Farmington Hills

#### Get involved on grocer need

**I** have been a Farmington resident for the past six years. The main reason my husband and I chose Farmington as our new home is because it has a central business district with attached neighborhoods with sidewalks. I liked the idea of being able to walk or ride my bike to the store for groceries and incidentals. I am so weary of the suburban lifestyle of having to get into the car to drive everywhere. Living in Downtown Farmington has really changed my lifestyle for the better. My 6-year-

old son walks to and from school. My family walks to church. We walk to the pool. We walk to the library. We walk to the park. We walk to the movies. We walk to City Hall. We walk to the bank. However, we don't walk to Farmer Jack for groceries. I shop at the Livonia Kroger.

The downtown Farmer Jack is filthy! The ceiling tiles are warped and stained. The floor is old and stained... I've had to return food every time I have shopped there. Because of such poor quality standards I have taken my business to the Livonia Kroger and have been shopping there for the past six years.

I understand there is a pending closure of the downtown Farmer Jack. What an opportunity for Farmington! We now have the chance to have a decent neighborhood grocer that can serve the surrounding community! Do you realize the number of people a high quality grocer in the downtown location can serve?

There are several attached neighborhoods with growing families that would shop at a quality neighborhood grocer. A senior citizen apartment complex is directly across the street. Those people walk to the store. They need a quality grocer within walking distance. They have no choice. I know I would be so thrilled to spend my money in downtown Farmington instead of Livonia!

I want to know what is being done to ensure that downtown Farmington will have a high quality neighborhood grocer located in the Kimco building. I have addressed the city officials and they have been helpful. But they believe that it is up to Kimco to seek out, recruit and place a top quality grocer in the downtown location. I have faxed letters to Kimco and to Christian Haub, President of A&P Corporation. I am deeply concerned that some other type of store will be placed in the current Farmer Jack location i.e. an outlet store. We desperately need a quality grocer with high standards who truly cares about serving the community. The last thing we need is a shuttered Farmer Jack or yet another outlet store. Farmington is not Birch Run! This is an upscale small town community with a strong central business district and beautiful surrounding neighborhoods.

I don't want to see downtown Farmington lacking a quality grocer. And I don't want any more outlet or discount stores! It is time for citizens to become activists and show that they care about downtown Farmington. Call City Hall! They are willing to help us improve downtown Farmington. This is our town. We need to involve ourselves in its issues to resolve them to our satisfaction. Citizens, don't be complacent. If you are, then you have no right to complain!

Annalee Morrison  
Farmington

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— Philip Power