

# District promises computer phase-in won't slow learning

Building exteriors throughout Farmington Public Schools are undergoing face lifts with money from last September's successful bond issue. But some of that money is also helping shore up what's being learned inside those walls.

Bids are being sought for the purchase of 215 computers — including 105 directly linked to the bond issue construction, according to a report during Tuesday's Farmington Board of Education meeting.

The switch to new computers would be done with minimal impact on classroom learning, said Kathy Jones, the district's director of information management.

"The priorities we've set, equipment must be highly reliable (and working) with a minimum of down time," Jones said. "There needs to be consistency."

Recommendations for the computer contract might be made at

**'The priorities we've set, equipment must be highly reliable (and working) with a minimum of down time.'**

**Kathy Jones**  
—Information management director

the school board's Aug. 18 meeting, or in early September, Jones said. She could not estimate the price of what the bids might come back at. "It's such a competitive market," Jones said. "We really don't know...."

Of the 215 computers, 105 would be added to the district's inventory; the remaining 110 would replace existing, five-year-old terminals — the end of the line as far as school officials are concerned.

"When they hit the five-year mark," Jones said later, "we look

to replace them. We'll go from using older, slower computers to newer, quicker ones."

New machines will go into new computer labs at Farmington High School, Longacre and Kenbrook elementary and into the applied technology program at Power Middle School, Jones said. Replacements are scheduled for Dunckel and Warner middle schools, "pretty much throughout the district."

"We're trying to meet some immediate needs and tie new equipment acquisitions to the construction schedule."

If the board makes a decision in mid-August or early September, the computers could be fully evaluated and up and running during October, she estimated.

New computers and improved technology were among components of last September's two-pronged bond issue proposal totaling \$93.1 million.

## Gas program gives consumers a choice

The newly-appointed Farmington Hills Consumer Protection Committee wants to alert residents, who use natural gas, to a new program called "The Consumer Choice Program."

In December 1997, the Michigan Public Service Commission approved a test deregulation program that allows Consumers Energy customers to buy their natural gas from alternative suppliers. Consumers Energy would still deliver the gas and handle service and emergency calls as well as meter reading.

Charges for gas will be frozen at the current rate of 28.364 cents per each 100 cubic-feet of natural gas. These charges will be the same for Consumers Energy customers and customers who switch to an alternate supplier. However, if a customer switches, the price may vary.

So far, according to Call for Action, a nationwide consumer protection organization, there are nine companies that are listed locally as alternative, non-regulated suppliers. Some of these suppliers may contact Farmington Hills residents by direct

mail, door to door solicitation, even over the Internet.

Some of these alternate suppliers going door to door are asking people to show them their Consumers Energy bill. Consumer protection committee urges people to be aware that if they have a customer's account number, they could send in a change of gas without permission.

People do not have to give any information over the phone or at the door. While the committee believes there is nothing wrong with changing suppliers, it should be done with a customer's permission.

When encountering a solicitor, people should get the person's name and phone number to check the company out before making a decision. Consumers Energy does not send out solicitors. In Farmington Hills, solicitors must be approved by the city and wear ID badges.

For more information, phone Call for Action at 248-827-3361 between 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## Local businessman is appointed to national board



Ronald Berglund of SeeCom, Comprehensive Eye Care of Michigan, Farmington Hills, has been appointed by the director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to the 1998

Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

The award, created by public law in 1987, is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. company can receive.

As an examiner, Berglund is responsible for reviewing and

evaluating applications submitted for the award.

The board is comprised of about 300 leading experts selected from industry, professional and trade organizations, health care and education organizations and government.

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