

Farmington Observer

HomeTown COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION
Putting you in touch with your world

Sunday
July 4, 1999

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 111 years

VOLUME 50 NUMBER 88

FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN • 58 PAGES <http://observer@eccentric.com>

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

© 1999 HomeTown Communications Network, Inc.

Seminar is canceled

The Michigan Freedom of Information Act / Open Meetings Act seminar for public officials scheduled for 1:30-3:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 7 in Livonia City Hall has been canceled due to changes in the schedule of Michigan Attorney General Jennifer Granholm.

The two-hour seminar, co-sponsored by the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and the Michigan Press Association, was to have featured Granholm discussing the laws and taking questions from public officials.

The seminar will be rescheduled for fall.

Farmington to buy Civic Theatre



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEEZEL

Tradition: The Farmington City Council will consider buying the popular Civic Theatre at its next meeting Tuesday night. If purchased, the city would hire a management company.

With more than 100 movie screens in a seven-mile radius of the Civic, owner Greg Hohler decided the time is now to get out of the business. His imminent sale of the theater to the city of Farmington ends the Hohler family ownership, which dates back to 1940.

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@ec.homecomm.net

The "Civic" soon will belong to the city.

On Tuesday, the city council is expected to ratify a \$316,500 purchase agreement to buy the Farmington Civic Theatre from longtime owner Greg Hohler, and then approve a contract with Wixombased M.K.A., Inc. to manage the building and business.

If the deal passes muster with council members, the city will take money from the capital improvements fund, but reimburse itself via the sale of revenue bonds, said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

"The debt on the bonds will be paid off on an annual basis," explained Lauhoff, "from revenue (generated) from the theater."

That, he emphasized, means citizens will not be asked to pay additional city taxes.

Pending ratification, Hohler's final day of ownership is Tuesday Aug. 31; M.K.A. takes over on Wednesday, Sept. 1.

"Since they (council members) made the offer, in all likelihood it's going to be ratified," Lauhoff said.

Although Lauhoff anticipates M.K.A. will make improvements to eventually provide customers with a more comfortable viewing environment, there still will be two movie screens at bargain rates. "Nothing's going to change," Lauhoff did hint about one change, however, Weekend matinees - discontinued by Hohler seven years ago because he couldn't justify either working marathon days or hiring somebody to screen movies for him - will return perhaps as soon as December.

On Tuesday, the city council is expected to ratify a \$316,500 purchase agreement to buy the Farmington Civic Theatre.

The deal would conclude the Hohler family's 59-year ownership of the Grand River facility, considered the longest continuous span of an independent theater in Michigan. Greg's father, Edward J. Hohler, opened the place; the younger Hohler, now 52, took over in 1973.

"Tickets were \$2.50 then and they're \$2.50 now," Greg Hohler said with a smile, during an exclusive interview Thursday afternoon about the pending sale.

Hohler then turned sentimental. "My entire life has been at that theater, from the time I was one year old," Hohler said. "I've scraped gum off the seats, from my hands and knees, since I was old enough to crawl."

But as of Wednesday, Sept. 1, Hohler will be "out of the movie business totally" and begin pursuing whatever direction his life will take. Wherever it goes, from a professional standpoint, he promises to stay in Farmington, where he's lived almost his entire life and raised a family.

"I've been agonizing over this decision for many years," Hohler continued. "My industry is such that it is getting harder and harder for the small independent exhibitor to operate. You can see the number (of independents) that have closed throughout Michigan. It's been a hard decision for me to come to, but I realized it was a necessary

Please see CIVIC, A5

AHEAD

Wow! Don't miss the Farmington Founders Festival fireworks at 10 p.m. in Founders Park on Eight Mile.

INDEX

Obituaries	A5
Crossword	E7
Classified Index	E6
Autos	H1
Home & Service	H2
Jobs	G1
Rentals	E7
Sports	D1
Entertainment	G1
New Homes	E1

Census: Hills up, city down

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@ec.homecomm.net

Latest U.S. Census estimates only confirm what city officials have known: Farmington Hills is packed with people.

Hills population grew by 6,170 from 74,616 to 79,784 between 1990-98, according to U.S. Census tabulations. That's a 7-percent increase.

ESTIMATES

Farmington experienced a dip of 2.2 percent during the same eight-year period, according to figures released Wednesday.

Farmington Hills population figures are likely to increase 10 percent when the more substantial census is completed in 2000, predicted Rick Lampi, a Hills planner. The recent U.S. Census report is based on estimates.

While the percentage increase falls

Please see CENSUS, A5

Walled Lake student faces video eavesdropping charges

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@ec.homecomm.net

An attorney for a Farmington Hills man charged with eavesdropping claims the case is more a tale than a tale of the tape.

Robert Mickam, 18, is charged with three counts of eavesdropping and installing an illegal recording device. Police say the Walled Lake Western High student secretly videotaped three teenage girls while they were getting undressed. On Friday, Mickam stood mute as he was arraigned in 47th District Court. Judge Marie Parker set personal bond at \$10,000 and ordered a preliminary exam 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 18.

He's also charged with one count of eavesdropping in West Bloomfield. If convicted, each felony count carries two years in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine.

Mickam, dressed in a navy blue suit, answered the judge directly during the arraignment. He declined comment afterward.

"From our understanding, there is absolutely no physical evidence in this case," said attorney Eric Nemeth, Mickam's co-counsel. "There is no tape, there's no video, there's no camera."

"This is a case that is based strictly upon testi-

mony of some teenagers who claim something happened."

Police seized 70 videotapes from the family's Hills home and cottage in Ottawa County June 18.

Tapes depicting incidents haven't been found. Authorities say Mickam, who knew he was being investigated, would have had time to dispose of the recordings.

Authorities believe he hid a video camera in the bathroom of a West Bloomfield Township home and in his parents' house where he taped girls ages 16-17.

Three males told police they were shown the questionable tapes.

A father of one girl made a report to Farmington Hills police after rumors circulated around Walled Lake Western High in May.

Though no tape or camera has been found, authorities maintain they have a solid case.

"We have at least three separate witnesses that were shown the tapes who came forward and are prepared to testify," said William Dwyer, Hills police chief. "In fact, if it wasn't for these young men coming forward with the information, this case never would have been initiated."

"You have to applaud those young men for com-

Please see VIDEO, A5



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEEZEL

Charged: Robert Mickam in 47th District Court with co-counsel Brian Legghio at the arraignment Thursday afternoon.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BEEZEL

Tenacious: Vicki Bell was injured years ago when the car in which she was a passenger was hit by a truck. She supports the use of seatbelts and bicycle helmets.

Injuries are no match for her humor, honesty

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@ec.homecomm.net

When Vicki Bell asks her mother if she looks handicapped, her mother doesn't lie.

She walks with a cane and has a peach and silver colored brace secured to her left leg, her mother tells her. Millie Bell's frankness with Vicki comes with a caveat, though.

"In the eyes of the world, you have a lot of people with handicaps that others can't see," Millie said.

With Vicki, 42, who lives in Farmington Hills, you see what you get. A severe brain injury that paralyzed her left side and impaired her speech is no match for her unflappable humor and honesty.

For 20 years, she's attempted to live

For 20 years, she's attempted to live a normal life despite a closed head injury suffered in an automobile accident.

a normal life despite a closed head injury suffered in an automobile accident. A Mack truck hit the vehicle side and her husband were in - not once but twice - near Traverse City en route to a camping trip.

Vicki, who was not wearing a seat belt, remained in a coma for four months. In addition to numerous physical injuries, she suffers from amnesia.

Please see VICKI, A5

