

# Farmington Observer

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There's gotta be a better way!

Help us: East, west, north and south — wherever you look in Farmington and Farmington Hills, road construction is under way. It's tough to get to work, to school and in some cases the grocery store and shopping malls.

Those of you behind the wheel on I-275 between Five Mile and I-696 or any local roads are learning how to avoid some of the pitfalls.

Complaining does no good. We want to know what you're doing about it. Have you found alternate routes?

We're interested in hearing from you. Please fax your responses to (248) 477-9722 e-mail them to Joanne Maliszewski, editor, at jmaliszewski@oe.hometown.com.net or mail them to the Observer at 33411 Grand River, Farmington, 48335. Your tips will be shared.

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## Judge says no to class action suit

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
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Residents plan to go ahead with their flooding lawsuits against the city of Farmington Hills, despite a circuit court judge denying to give class action status to the case.

On Wednesday, Oakland County Circuit Judge Jessica Cooper ruled the

class action request "was insufficient," saying more information is needed about who would comprise up to 160 plaintiffs.

Some 20 homeowners attended the hearing. Outside the courtroom, they met with attorney Steven Liddle.

"That she's basically saying is, 'come back and see me after you've looked into some of those issues,'" Liddle said.

### FLOODING

"She did not say this is with prejudice, so I'm not going to grant (class action certification)."

Liddle said "a bunch" of individual lawsuits will be filed by Friday to seek damages from flooding, which resi-

dents contend is caused by an overburdened and antiquated sewer system. Those suits — at least 25 — will eventually be combined.

An attorney for the city said a "100-year rain" that dumped four inches is the primary cause of flooding Aug. 6.

Said Ross Malifort, who lives in

Please see SUIT, A7

## Council tips hat to required helmets

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
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From their hearts and minds, people spoke for and against a Farmington Hills bike helmet ordinance.

Children 16 and under will be required to wear helmets when biking, rollerblading or skateboarding. The ordinance is expected to be formally adopted in June.

A first offense will lead to a warning. A second results in a \$5 fine, which will be dismissed if a parent comes into

the police station and shows that they have bought the child a helmet.

At Monday's Hills City Council meeting, the issue boiled down to a passionate and, at times, eloquent debate of safety versus civil liberties.

Children accompanied moms and dads to the podium. A mother even lined up five helmets to represent family members.

"This is my family," said Julie Devino, a Farmington resident. "This protects my family's brains and it pro-

Please see HELMET, A5

## Attorney says let parents make choice

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
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Before children strap on a bike helmet under a new ordinance, a Farmington Hills resident thinks they or at least their parents should have a choice.

Farmington-based attorney Robert Igrisan has taken a petition to put the newly introduced bike helmet law on the ballot.

Igrisan estimates he needs roughly 4,400 signatures, which is 15 percent of the 29,160 Hills residents who voted in the November election. He's against the ordinance, saying it goes too far.

"I think it's a bad bill the way it's written," Igrisan said. "It covers everything. You can't ride on your driveway. You might fall and go boom-boom. I

### HELMETS

don't get this. "To me this is a feel-good piece of legislation that doesn't necessarily do a whole lot and takes away a lot and gives impetus to take away a lot more."

A helmet is not going to protect a bike rider or roller blader if hit by car, Igrisan said. "If you fall down, that's just scrapes and cuts," he said. "That's life ... Do we want to the tomb protect people?"

At Monday's meeting, Igrisan spoke against the measure. Farmington Hills City Council formally introduced the ordinance and will likely adopt it at a meeting in June.

Please see CHOICE, A5



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRISKIN

Safety: Samantha Paquette, at student at Gill Elementary, fastens her bike helmet before hitting the road.



Gathering: Nothing could be better than good friends, good times and good food. Just ask members of ROMEO — Retired Older Men Eating Out. They meet at Ram's Horn in Farmington.

## ROMEO'S are a 'piece of cake'

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
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In this story of Romeo, the damsel at the window juggles breakfast plates and fills coffee mugs.

ROMEO stands for Retired Older Men Eating Out, which by name alone would bury the needle on the curmudgeon meter. Yet the 20 or so men who meet once a month for breakfast at Ram's Horn in Farmington are more jovial than jowly, just as likely to possess more jump than grump.

"These guys are a piece of cake," assured Ram's Horn waitress Jennifer Byleki, who keeps all their orders

straight.

The men of ROMEO started gathering after Thursday morning Mass at Our Lady of Sorrows four years ago.

They talk about politics (decidedly conservative where President Clinton's name is more likely to be hissed than spoken) and share their travels, sports and war stories.

"The best war story I heard was about the guy who received a medal for saving 300 soldiers' lives during 'the war,'" said Ted Klapporich, a charter ROMEO member. "He shot the cook."

Please see ROMEO, A5

## Police, schools mean business

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI  
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You can't yell "fire" in a crowded theater. And there's a reason.

"And there are times in our community when you can't do that either," said Bob Maxfield, Farmington Public Schools superintendent. "We want to let the kids know these are now delicate times and we have to be careful. Reckless statements will be taken seriously."

See related story page A6

So seriously that kids who make threats — either jokingly or seriously — will be prosecuted, said Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer.

"Reckless students may be prosecuted. We treat each case separately," Dwyer added. "In many cases, just a threat itself can become a criminal warrant."

Maxfield echoed his sentiments. "We intend to prosecute to the full extent of the law."

In schools in Farmington Hills, police have investigated more than a dozen incidents, while in Farmington there have been two reported incidents, according to Public Safety Director Gary Goss. Some of the incidents have involved threats, others the use of the

Please see FORUM, A5

## Krueger gets city's nod

BY TIM SMITH  
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Expansion of H.R. Krueger Machine Tool is expected to begin later this year following final approvals from Farmington's planning commission and zoning board of appeals.

### EXPANSION

Krueger's 16,600-square-foot expansion is being viewed as one of the redevelopment catalysts for that part of Farmington, said Frank Lauhoff, city manager.

"This is an area of Grand River ... that the city's new master plan spent a lot of time looking at," Lauhoff said. "It's for an overall better look. And it's a great opportunity right now."

Lauhoff mentioned other possible projects near Grand River-Orchard Lake: renovation of Jack Demmer Lincoln-Mercury construction of the Zanetti Professional Office Building; rebuilding the Hong Kong Restaurant, which was destroyed in a late 1998 fire.

On Monday, the planning commission approved the final piece of the Krueger

Please see EXPAND, A7

