

# Farmington Observer

Serving Farmington and Farmington Hills for 113 years

HomeTown  
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK  
Putting you in touch  
with your world

VOLUME 113 NUMBER 11

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

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

© 1998 HomeTown Communications Network, Inc.



## THE WEEK AHEAD TUESDAY

**Vote:** Today is election day. Polls for Farmington and Farmington Hills voters open at 7 a.m. Both communities have candidates and ballot proposals.

**Meeting:** The Farmington Board of Education will meet at 7:30 p.m. at the Lewis Schulman Administrative Center, 32500 Shiawassee.

### INDEX

Arts	C1
Classified Index	E4
Autos	H1
Home & Service	H2
Jobs	G1
Real Estate	E1
Rentals	E9
Crossword	E8
Health	D4
Malls	C4
Movies	C5
New Homes	E1
Obituaries	A6
Sports	B1
Taste	D1

## Expense reports show variety

**Polls will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday and expense reports are in for Farmington Hills candidates.**

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

In Farmington Hills, the mother's milk of politics is far from homogenized.

Mayoral and city council candidates tapped a wide variety of sources to pay for their respective campaigns, according to pre-election statements filed.

Candidates who expect to spend more than \$1,000 had to file campaign finance reports with Oakland County Election Division by the Oct. 22 pre-election deadline.

Four of the five city council hopefuls filed statements.

Ron Oliverio turned his in Thursday, four business days after the deadline. He is subject to a \$100 fine, a county election clerk said.

Paul Molin asked for a waiver, stating he doesn't intend to spend more than \$1,000.

Myorol hopefuls Nancy Bates and George Sarkisian are further apart in money raised than they are on issues.

Mayor Pro-Tem Bates has generated three times the money of her opponent. "I will not spend one dollar more than the position pays," Sarkisian said.

The mayor receives a \$2,700 salary annually, though a charter amendment on the Nov. 2 ballot would increase that to \$7,600 if approved by voters.

Since Feb. 18, Friends of Nancy Bates raised \$6,215 and spent \$4,351 so far.

The Committee to Elect George Sarkisian received \$270 in direct contributions but the candidate has spent

Please see EXPENSES, A7

## Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAZELER

**Missing you:** Farmington Hills City Clerk Kathy Dornan wishes the best to outgoing Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi. Staff, elected officials and friends gathered Friday to say goodbye.

## Thanks, bye and take care

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

How do you say thanks to the city's first directly-elected mayor?

If you're Farmington Hills resident Annabelle Gable, you present the oft-quoted elected official with a brown bag full of his newspaper clippings.

Gable has become a council watcher during Aldo Vagnozzi's four-year term as mayor.

"He's done a fine job of running the city," Gable said.

Hills staff joined Farmington city

**■ If you're Farmington Hills resident Annabelle Gable, you present the oft-quoted elected official with a brown bag full of his newspaper clippings.**

Hills City Manager Steve Brock and his staff presented Vagnozzi with a bonsai tree with an engraved tribute.

That prompted Farmington City Council member Bill Hartsack to say he'd like to give the mayor a solid oak tree.

"It would be a short oak nonetheless," Hartsack added referring to Vagnozzi's diminutive size.

Vagnozzi, who is adept at giving out zingers, could only laugh.

Hartsack like others cited

Please see ALDO, A7

## Residents report seeing black panther

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

On foot and by air, authorities tried to track down a black panther after two residents reported seeing the sleek predator Thursday.

Around 6:30 p.m. a Woodhill Street resident reported seeing the large cat walking north into a wooded area in the southwest area of the city. A second caller told Farmington Hills police he saw a panther near Founders Park.

Hills police joined a Channel 2 news crew to search the area in a helicopter, using an infra-red light.

Officers also canvassed the woods on foot.

"Animals were spotted like horses, but there were no large cats reported," said Assistant Chief Marty Bledsoe.

The department also checked with a Michigan Humane Society naturalist and other cities for similar reports, but there have been none so far, Bledsoe said.

"Is it possible there could be a panther? Yes. Is it probable? Probably not," Bledsoe said.

Police remain on alert but urge residents to remain calm, Bledsoe said.

Two months ago, naturalist Joe Derek said he checked out two sightings, one at Drake and 11 Mile and the other at the entrance of Oakland Community College.

A state bill would make owning an exotic pet such as a panther, cougar or python illegal.

"If that comes to be, some of these people who owns these animals will be trying to unload them in wild areas," Derek said. "First you had pythons and now this."

In the past six weeks, police caught two pythons roaming loose in the Hills.

Panther sightings are not unique in Farmington Hills. In 1987, a resident in the 13 Mile-Haggerty area reported seeing a three-foot long, 60-pound cat with a smooth black coat in his back yard.

## Warren man heads to prison

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

A man who stabbed his ex-lover in excess of 40 times left the victim's family members with more lingering questions.

As expected, an Oakland County Circuit Court judge sentenced Mikhail Ellis' murderer to life in prison Thursday.

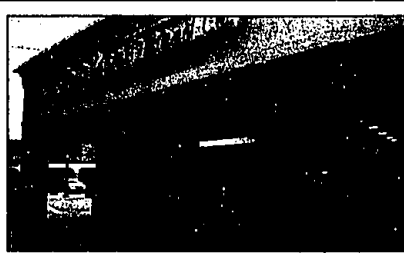
A jury found James F. Summerville of Warren guilty of first-degree murder in the stabbing death of Ellis, 32, in the victim's Farmington Hills apartment May 1998.

In addition to life without parole, Judge Barry Howard sentenced Summerville to one to two years for stealing the victim's sport utility vehicle and one to four years for using Ellis' credit cards.

At his sentencing, Summerville apologized and said he hoped to live long enough to see justice served.

"I don't know what he meant by that," said Keith Hicks, Ellis' brother, who attended the sentencing with his younger brother, aunt and cousin.

Please see SENTENCE, A6



Almost: Great Harvest is expected to open on Thursday, Nov. 4. Work continues.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAZELER

## Great Harvest Thursday's a big day

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

Great Harvest Bread Co., the latest entry to the downtown Farmington bread wars, is scheduled to officially open with a ribbon-cutting ceremony 10 a.m. Thursday.

And, according to manager Jennifer Wolfe, the Downtown Farm-

ington Center store will open on schedule - even though anyone peeking inside late last week might think otherwise.

"We are positive," Wolfe said. "We are going to be open on Thursday the 4th with a ribbon cutting at 10 o'clock."

Farmington Mayor Mary Bush,

Please see HARVEST, A7

## City voters get choice for first time in 6 years

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

Farmington residents Tuesday have to make a council choice for the first time in six years when they elect three of four candidates.

Incumbents William Hartsack, JoAnne McShane and James Mitchell are vying against challenger Stephen Dibert. The top two vote-getters will earn four-year terms; the third-place finisher receives two years on council.

Also to be decided are three charter amendments. Charter Amendment 1, if approved, would raise the annual salary of the mayor and council members from \$900 to \$1,800. It would be the first increase since 1970.

Charter Amendment 2, if approved, would change the residency requirement for those interested in serving on city boards and commissions. Candidates now must live in Farmington for three years to be eligible. The amendment would drop that down to one year. City officials maintain that the change would increase the pool of applicants for the various positions.

The third charter amendment is for

housekeeping purposes, according to Frank Lauhoff, city manager. The requirement that the council hold a regular meeting at 8 p.m. on the Monday following each regular city election would be eliminated.

Lauhoff said the requirement dates back to when city elections took place in the spring.

According to Farmington City Clerk Patsy Cantrell late last week, it is too curly and too difficult to predict whether more people will come out Tuesday to decide the council race and trio of amendments than in 1997, the last year that local decisions were the only ones facing voters.

There are 7,762 registered voters. As of Thursday, 228 people had applied for absentee ballots. In 1997, there were 117 AV votes cast, out of the total 676 votes.

"It's so hard to predict," Cantrell said, about the larger number of AV requests to date. "It might just mean a lot of people are out of town."

Cantrell said election-related activity at city hall "seems to be pretty much as usual. I haven't noted anything too different from recent city elections."

Please see VOTE, A7

