

# Farmington Observer

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## New, cushier seats ready this weekend

Brand new, cushioned seats are being installed this week in both the upper and lower auditoriums. Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said a total of about 420 seats should be ready for use as of this weekend.

The Civic was closed Monday and Tuesday to allow for that seating installation to begin. Also Monday, new lobby doors were installed. Lauhoff said the first floor bathroom was expected to be operating before the weekend.



## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Publicize:** The school board is talking about marketing the district. /A2

## OPINION

**Holiday spirit:** If you have an inkling to help other people, give a call to the Goodfellows, the Salvation Army or the group of your choice. Your help is needed. /A12

**Letters:** Your neighbors offer their opinions on a myriad of topics. /A13

## COMMUNITY LIFE

**Holiday season:** Jews celebrate Hanukkah beginning at sundown Friday. /B1

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## SAVINGS CARD

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# Residents air their grievances

The Michigan Public Service Commission was in town to listen to complaints about electrical service and power outages. But officials and residents want to know what the panel is going to do about problems.

BY RICHARD PEARL  
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We'll do the best we can. That, in effect, was what the Michigan Public Service Commission said Monday night in Farmington Hills after hearing a barrage of complaints from elected officials and residents about ongoing problems with Detroit Edison's electrical power service.

The three-member commission came from Lansing to the William Costick Center in the Hills to conduct the second of three metropolitan-Detroit fact-

Please see related story page A7

finding sessions -- the first took place earlier Monday in Dearborn, the last is slated for Thursday in Rochester. The hearings' focus: The long-standing and well-documented consumer problems with the big utility regarding continuing power outages, poor customer service and complaints about poorly trained repair crews.

"We will try to get some things resolved," said PSC Chairman John

Please see PSC, A6



Listen: David Svanda, John Strand and Robert Nelson serve on the Michigan Public Service Commission which was in Farmington Hills Monday night to listen to concerns.

## On being an American

BY TIM SMITH  
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Tatiana Chyorny remembers very well the day she officially became an American citizen: Monday, Sept. 27. The 39-year-old Chyorny, a bilingual instructional assistant at Lanigan Elementary School, had to fight heavy downtown traffic that day due to the final baseball game at Tiger Stadium. She was sworn in as a citizen during ceremonies at the federal building in Detroit.

"It was the day Tiger Stadium closed and I really had trouble getting out of there," said Chyorny during a lunch break from her daily tutoring of pupils. But the traffic hassle was worth the trouble. It was a rather insignificant bump in the road considering how long and far the Russian immigrant battled to become an American.

"I can do anything with my life here," Tatiana said, with a warm smile of relief. "I can be judged on my merit." Another time, Chyorny recalls with affection is an October meeting of the Farmington Board of Education, when she was officially lauded for her accomplishment. "I thought it was really nice of the district to do that," she said. "I don't believe all school districts do that for their employees -- recognize their citizenship."

### The road to freedom

Such public recognition probably reinforced what Chyorny already knew: Life in America is quite a welcome change from life in Russia.

Recalling her former country, Chyorny said the atmosphere was tense and oppressive.

"I felt trapped," she said quietly, adding that she needed to do weekend tutoring just to feed her family.

Although she was a teacher at a specialized school in Latvia, "they were trying to push us (out) of our jobs ... telling us we had to go back to school."

"I was living with no civil rights and no hope for the future," she said. "The price for a piece of bread tripled and our wages were the same. And, at the same time, the tension was so great."

It was time to get out. But the rewards of freedom weren't gained without some challenges along the way. In fact, the road here was anything but smooth for her and her 14-year-old son Edwin, a freshman at Livonia Clarenceville High School.

In 1994, Tatiana and Edwin left behind their beautiful seaside apartment in Latvia and virtually all their personal belongings. They embarked on a five-day, cross-country train trek to Siberia. "I had to sneak



Official: Tatiana Chyorny, a bilingual instructional assistant at Lanigan Elementary School, is now a U.S. citizen.

■ "I was living with no civil rights and no hope for the future. (The price for) a piece of bread tripled and our wages were the same. And, at the same time, the tension was so great."

Tatiana Chyorny  
—Latvian native

out my son to Siberia on the pretense he was visiting his grandmother."

From there, Tatiana flew to the United States, because of a special contract arrangement with the YMCA to attend a Girl Scout camp. "I had connections."

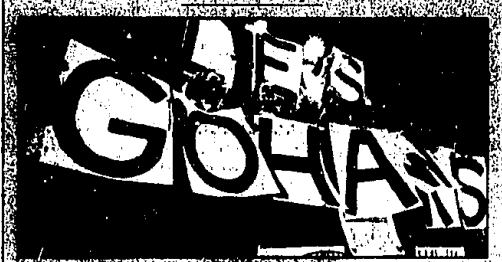
But Edwin had to stay behind until two years later, when Tatiana finally made her way through all the legal red tape that kept them separated.

Those hardships somehow are now almost forgotten. First, they were reunited in the Detroit area, which seemed perfect for Tatiana because of the substantial Russian-speaking population. Then, she met her husband Alexander Chyorny, also a Russian immigrant, and bought a home in Livonia.

"The biggest happy event, after I got my son over, was I was able to purchase my house. I never was able to own anything before," Tatiana said.

Please see TATIANA, A6

## State champs



WE'VE GOT ONE: They own the Dome. Students and fans cheered as the Pontiac Silverdome cheer for Farmington Hawks as they defeated the 10th state-ranked team, the Hawks, in a worthy opponent, beating Grand Rapids Crusaders in a high-scoring contest, 42-35. The win earned the Division 3 title for the team. Please turn page C1 for more photos and a story on the game.

## New Year will bring new look into parking

BY TIM SMITH  
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Parking and traffic in downtown Farmington apparently will be among the first subjects to be delved into by city officials in the new millennium.

During Monday evening's annual goal-setting/strategic planning session, council members and administrators agreed to collaborate with outside organizations on those issues.

Among the groups to be consulted, said Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff, are the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Michigan Municipal League and Wayne State University.

Lauhoff said the council cited four primary target areas, culled from a longer list supplied by the Traffic and Safety Board.

Those include:  
■ Traffic flow, for both vehicles and

pedestrians.

■ Space availability within a reasonable distance from businesses.

■ Accessibility to shops for senior citizens.

■ The location where employees park. From there, explained Lauhoff, the feedback will be returned to the Traffic and Safety Board, "because they came up with many concerns and council (Monday) narrowed that list. Council will ask the Traffic and Safety Board to stay involved."

It is expected that the discussions will begin early in 2000, but Lauhoff said there was no specific timetable in place.

"None of these, standing alone, are

Please see PARKING, A5