

# Farmington Observer

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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS



## SANTA LETTERS

Hey kids! Santa here. I sure would like to hear from you before I take off from the North Pole to make my deliveries for Christmas. If you are between the ages of 6 and 10, please send me a letter. You can do that by writing to my friend, Joanne Maliszewski, editor of the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, 48335. She will make sure I get your letters. But she can accept them only until 5 p.m. Monday, Dec. 20, because of my schedule with the sleigh and the reindeer. Your letter should be no more than 25 words. We welcome your photos, too, but please put your name on the back of it. Until I hear from you, here's wishing you Happy Holidays and a very Happy New Year!

## IN THE PAPER TODAY

Looking ahead: The Farmington City Council sets goals for the year 2000./A2

Fire: No one was injured in a fire that destroyed a mobile home in Farmington Hills./A6

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## First phase of remake nearly done

According to Farmington City Manager Frank Lauff, the first phase of renovations to the Civic Theatre is "really nearing the end," enough to ensure the facility will be fully ready for the Jan. 8, 2000, official grand re-opening. Carpeting was being installed, and work on the revamped and relocated ticket counter also was expected to be finished this week, Lauff said. Neon lobby lights also were to have been put in and the extended low lower auditorium stage completed. A new marquee also is up.



## Big gala planned for Civic

■ Get ready for the grand reopening of the Civic Theatre planned for Jan. 7-9. Tickets for the gala are on sale beginning today.

BY TIM SMITH  
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They're going to party like it's 1940 all over again at the Civic Theatre.

Details were firming up this week for the much-anticipated Civic Theatre Grand Re-opening Gala Weekend. A \$50-per-ticket gala on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2000, probably will be the celebration's pinnacle. But, efforts were made



### REOPENING

so that those not attending the function would have a chance to be part of the unveiling.

According to Farmington Mayor Bill Hartsock, there will be opportunities available for anybody in the community to help with the festivities, which are scheduled Friday-Sunday, Jan. 7-9, 2000.

"We're doing this for the citizens," said Hartsock. "That whole weekend is designed to showcase the theater. The idea is to roll (ticket admissions) back to 1940 prices and encouraging all to come and see the new theater."

"It's their theater, literally. We want to show it off. Already there is a lot of excitement."

The city of Farmington purchased the Civic this year from Greg Hohler, whose family had owned the Grand River landmark since its opening in 1940.

Please see CIVIC, A7



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDLER  
Get ready: The Civic will have a grand reopening on Jan. 8.

## Another hurdle cleared

BY TIM SMITH  
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The construction of a new 47th District Court facility is one hurdle closer to becoming reality following Farmington City Council's go-ahead Monday to

### 47TH DISTRICT COURT

move the project into the design phase. Likely following suit next Monday, Dec. 13, will be the Farmington Hills City Council. Hills council members will decide whether to also approve recommendations from the court's facility planning committee.

If they do, design work could begin next month on a two-story facility within the Hills government and police-fire complex on the southwest corner of Orchard Lake and 11 Mile roads. The 30,000-to-43,000-square-foot facility would be linked to the Hills police department, where 85 percent of 47th District Court cases originate, said David Walsh, administrator.

"That's a big key," Walsh said, about the planned location. "It would be right next to the police department and in a government setting. The courthouse now is isolated in a residential area. ... It will be easier to coordinate service."

Estimated architectural fees for those drawings are \$475,000-\$500,000; the projected total cost to build a new courthouse is \$9-\$10 million. Both cities will share the costs, but much bigger Farmington Hills will foot the majority of the bill.

Although 47th District Judge Fred Harris left the Farmington council meeting "elated" with the unanimous decision to back recommendations from the court's facility planning committee, he didn't want to speculate whether or not a new courthouse would also mean a third judge might be authorized by

Please see COURT, A8

## Police chief cautions on use of unsecure ATM bank machines

BY RICHARD PEARL  
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A rash of thefts from some outside automated teller machines at a chain of metro Detroit gas stations - including one early Saturday in Farmington Hills - has drawn a warning for the public from Hills Police Chief William Dwyer.

"I would recommend no one use those types of machines that are unguarded, unsecured and which have no video camera," Dwyer said Monday in the wake of the ATM break-in at the Clark gas station at 10 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads, in which \$63,000 was taken. The station was closed at the time, although the machine was available for use, the chief said.

"We're very fortunate someone hadn't wanted to use that machine" then. "They could have become a victim themselves."

■ The theft is both a local and a federal offense, according to banking laws. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is coordinating efforts with Hills police.

He said the machine is in an unprotected area "that's not well lit" and so "you're just waiting to be a victim."

"It's so different than in a bank facility, where they videotape all transactions."

Dwyer urged late-night ATM users in the area to come to the Hills police station at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake - one mile north - where there is an ATM in the lobby that does not charge a service fee.

Dwyer said Monday his department has no leads and asked anyone with

information concerning the break-in - one of at least seven at Clark stations in the area since Dec. 2 - contact his department at (248) 474-6181.

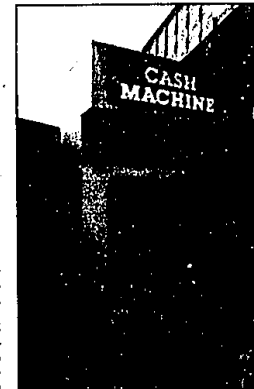
"We need the assistance of the public - (from) anyone who has any knowledge or had seen anything" around the time of the Hills break-in, Dwyer said.

The theft is both a local and a federal offense, according to banking laws. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is coordinating efforts with Hills police, the chief said.

Assistant Chief Chuck Nebus said since Dec. 2 there have been at least nine metro incidents at Clark ATMs, either attempts or actual break-ins. Involved were stations in Southfield, Commerce Township, Lake Orion and Auburn Hills in Oakland County and New Baltimore in Macomb County, he said.

The Auburn Hills and Farmington

Please see ATM, A8



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDLER

Stolen: Thieves jimmied open the back of this ATM at the corner of 10 Mile and Orchard Lake Road.

## Homeowners eye petition against plans

BY TIM SMITH  
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It's only been about a week or so since the dust settled following demolition of a vacant house on Lakeway Street in Farmington - the next step toward a possible expansion of Suburban Family Catholic Credit Union.

But as far as Lakeway residents are concerned, nothing is settled about the future of the pieces of property that the house once stood on.

Residents want to start a petition drive to keep the parcel zoned residential. The credit union is on the northeast corner of Grand River and Lakeway.

### Possible rezoning



"I moved here 25 years ago when (Lakeway) was a dirt road," said Sue Woods, who lives next to the now-empty parcel. "To see it go commercial, I'm just sick about it."

About a petition drive, Woods said

Please see RECORD, A7

## Commissioners review a host of county issues

BY RICHARD PEARL  
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Ask David L. Moffitt and Terry L. Seyer what they're most proud of accomplishing this year on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and they respond readily.

"The Farmington Hills Sewerline project both point to the county's newly enhanced emergency communications. Its efforts at funding sewerline and sewerage disposal and sewer

the quest for more road improvements funding.

But those aren't the only things, they said.

Veteran member Moffitt, an attorney who got the 911 telephone and inter-agency police communications rolling and pushed them through, also cited his efforts to get commission meetings televised to boost the public's awareness



David Moffitt

Please see COUNTY, A8

