Feeding geese can lead to citation

BY JONI HUSRED
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Folks who feed the geese that often flock to ponds in Farmington Hills may find themselves on the receiving end of a ticket for violating a city ordinance next year.

The city will unveil a proposed ordinance Monday night to effectively prohibit the feeding of pigeons, doves, gulls and Canada geese within the city. Officials and many residents agree the birds aren't just a nuisance. They are also endangered by traffic and other human factors.

"Once you start feeding the ducks and geese, they think it's a safe habitat," Pines of Farmington Hills Homeowners Association President Bob Brulee said at a recent council meeting. "We have this issue that is not going away until we have something on the books."

In addition to the ordinance introduction, officials will consider appointing board and commission members, approving an agreement with the Michigan Department of Transportation for utility installation at Northwestern Highway and Inkster Road and discuss drainage issues related to River Pines.

Officials are expected to approve a contract amendment that would relieve Waste Management of a requirement to hold a household hazardous waste day and contract with Clean Harbors Environmental Services to provide those services. The change will lower costs and provide residents with more opportunities to dispose of paint, chemicals and other household wastes that shouldn't be dumped with regular trash.

Airport radio ad tries humorous approach

BY KEN ABRAMCZYK
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Maybe you've heard the radio ads.

David Katz sits down for a Thanksgiving meal, far away from his job as director of Detroit Wayne County Metropolitan Airport, presumably to enjoy turkey in the traditional fashion with family members.

Soon it starts. First, his mother-in-law starts in on him about airport parking, then his brother chimes in about always getting lost at the airport. Katz reminds them about airport upgrades and conveniences: a new message sign, a parking hotline and parking exits.

The ads are a way for Katz and airport officials to acknowledge the public complaints and sometimes critical perceptions of the airport, but Katz uses the spots to update the public. Katz has a little fun with it, too, ending the spot with the line that he could eat a "little more turkey and a lot less crow" during the next holiday.

"Why would we go with the self-effacing, humorous approach?" asked Mike Conway, airport spokesman. "To do something amusing, and poke a little fun at ourselves. We felt people would listen to us more."

Airport officials found the ads a good way to inform the public about credit card express lanes for quicker ways to leave the parking deck, a parking hotline (1-800-642-1978) and a giant message sign informing motorists entering the airport about parking.

The idea for the ads came from Solomon Friedman Advertising with consultants at Caponigro Public Relations of Southfield. Airport officials wanted the humor so the ads wouldn't sound like officials are "preaching" to the public, Conway said.

Workers sought for 2000 census

Census takers and crew leaders for the Farmington and Farmington Hills area are needed for temporary, part-time government jobs that last two to eight weeks. The salary is $13.75-$15.25 per hour. A minimum of 20 hours per week is required.

Applicants must pass a 30-minute multiple choice test to be considered for employment. The test will be given at noon every Monday and Thursday starting Jan. 3 at Farmington Hills City Hall.

For more information call (734) 632-0200.

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Republicans seek to crack down on bingo fund-raisers

BY MIKE MALOTT
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Democrats say the real issues in campaign finance reform revolve around the largest contributors and the lack of controls on so-called "soft money."

Republicans however, Dems say, are hung up on bingo.

In fact, political bingo fund-raising parties — used more often by Democrats than Republicans — are indeed a target of proposed GOP reforms. House bill 5069, sponsored by Rep. Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) would eliminate a $20 "threshold" for recording contributions on campaign finance statements filed with the Secretary of State. If passed, candidates for office would have report each contribution on those statements, no matter how small.

"I know that really looks chicken," Sen. Shirley Johnson (R-Royal Oak) said. "But in some of the larger games, people throw in $20s and $20s and $20s one at a time. People put it large amounts of revenue without having to report it. Some people are really abusing the system."

In addition, reviews of some bingo games by the Secretary of State have turned up checks written to winners under apparently fictitious names, like "Merilyn Monroe" or "M.R. Magic."

"The point is they are issuing these checks to winners with the intent that they will never be cashed," Bishop explained, "so that money stays in the political coffers."

Republicans may be aiming at bingos but it will likely be candidates for local political office — city councils, township boards and school boards — who get caught in the crossfire, according to some Democrats. Gery Gariarino, deputy chief of staff for House Minority Leader Rep. Mike Hanie (D-Saginaw) said the paperwork burden of having to report all donations under $20 will fall heaviest on local candidates who raise far less than state candidates. A few big local races, like the contest for the mayor of Detroit, may rival the campaign war chests of state senators and representatives, but most will be significantly lower. And they rely on many smaller contributions, he said.

Besides, the issue of bingos has already been decided, Gariarino said. The GOP tried to outlaw them a few years back, a move which was eventually rejected by voters at the ballot box.

"Full disclosure, what could be a better campaign finance reform than that?" Bishop said in defense of his plan. "And what is so onerous about it?"

He argued that much of the debate over his plan is rhetoric.

"A lot of what I'm hearing is hot air. Someone made the point that they would have to report $1 or 25 cent sales of campaign buttons. Well, to the best of my knowledge buttons aren't sold, they are given away. And even if you do sell them for 25 cents or a $1, we should be paying attention to those people, especially to those people because they are giving what they can afford and they are making an investment in you," he said.

Bishop's bill is the linchpin in a five-bill reform package. Rep. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton) is a primary co-sponsor of the package. The bills have already won approve from the House and face Senate scrutiny in the short, two-week session before Christmas break. Considering the bills are unlikely to win any significant Democratic support, giving them immediate effect is unlikely. As a result, the bills have to pass by the end of this year if Republicans want them to go into effect before the next election.

Additionally, the package would:

- Double fees for campaign finance reports filed late.
- Require candidates to pay late fees out of their own pockets rather than from their campaign funds.
- Add deadlines for reviews of campaign finance complaints by the Secretary of State, and require notification of the results.
- Add criminal penalties for any false statements made on those reports.

Katie Baumgartner names the owl 'Webster'

What's the one book everybody knows is at the library?

Why, Noah Webster's dictionary, of course, said Katie Baumgartner.

Therefore, the 13-year-old Farmington girl reasoned, Webster would be the right name for the owl who is the mascot of the Children's Room in the Farmington Branch Library.

The judges of the Name the Owl Contest agreed and the eighth-grader from Our Lady of Sorrows Middle School in Farmington beat out almost 500 other entries to win the contest.

Katie, daughter of the Clifford Baumgartners, and one who likes to ride her bicycle as often as possible to the library, was presented with a stuffed owl and a gift certificate to Borders Books & Music during a ceremony Dec. 1 at the library.

Webster the electronic Great Horned Owl resides in one of the faux trees at the entrance to the children's area in the recently remodeled library.

When visitors approach, Webster greets them by flapping his wings and hooting.

(In photo) Katie receives a prize from Sally Gaines, Children's Library department head.

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