

POLICE AND FIRE CALLS

The following are police and fire reports made during the past week in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Car versus deer

In Farmington Hills:
A West Bloomfield woman driving a 1999 Cadillac collided with a deer just before midnight on Dec. 15 while traveling eastbound on 14 Mile Road at Eastland. Early on Dec. 16, an officer fired three rounds from his service revolver to kill the injured animal. Another car/deer accident was reported at 7:52 a.m. on Dec. 16, at Halsted and 12 Mile.

Personal injury accident

In Farmington Hills:
An 80-year-old Wixom woman was transported to Botsford Hospital last Thursday morning, after an accident for which police say she was to blame. While driving her 1998 Buick on 14 Mile Road near Briarcrest Knoll, she crossed the center line and struck a 1991 Cadillac, driven by a 44-year-old Farmington Hills man, then went off the roadway. The woman was cited for hazardous driving.

Turned in handgun

In Farmington Hills:
Farmington Police disposed of

a .38 caliber handgun and five rounds of ammunition turned in by a Dearborn woman. The gun was registered with Farmington Police Department when it was purchased.

Assault & Battery

In Farmington Hills:
A 13-year-old Dunckel Middle School student was suspended on Dec. 16 until the end of Christmas break after he punched another student in the eye. The victim had been teasing the offender for some time before the incident occurred, and there was no serious injury to his eye.

Larceny

In Farmington Hills:

A purse containing two checkbooks, credit cards, three \$25 gift certificates and \$210 in cash was stolen from a shopping cart at Borders last Thursday. The owner said she'd covered the purse with a newspaper to protect it from the rain, and found it missing when she went to retrieve it.

Attempted Breaking & Entering

In Farmington Hills:
Police suspect that a well-dressed man who claimed to have an interview at Godding & Associates on 13 Mile Road was

actually attempting to break into the business. An employee stopped the suspect some time between 6:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Dec. 15, but when he started asking questions, the man fled. The door showed evidence that someone had tried to pry it open.

Narcotics possession

In Farmington Hills:
An officer who stopped a speeding motorist last Thursday evening found himself writing another ticket for narcotics possession. The 28-year-old Dearborn man's 1998 Pontiac Firebird was impounded after police confiscated 1.5 grams of marijuana; the man was also wanted on

a warrant out of Roseville.

In Farmington Hills:
As they processed a Detroit woman being arrested on an outstanding warrant for failure to appear in court on a theft charge, police officers found a cache of drugs in the suspect's pocket. The bag contained five, one-gram baggies of marijuana, 14 packets of heroin, eight packets of crack cocaine and \$267 in cash.

In addition, an inventory of her possessions turned up three pieces of paper with names and numbers next to them, consistent with what officers called a "drug tally."

Business panel gives upbeat forecast for metro economy

BY MIKE MALOTT
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After nine years of economic expansion, one of the longest periods of growth in U.S. history, a slowdown could actually provide some welcome relief.

"There is going to be a mild pullback, there is no question," Larry Yost, chairman and CEO of Meritor Automotive, told members of the Detroit Economic Club Monday, Dec. 13, during its annual Economic Outlook Luncheon. "For those of us that are in the (auto) industry, it is expected. Not only expected, it is welcomed ... We look it as an opportunity to get some breathing space ... It is time for us to get back to basics. There are a lot of things we need to work on,

time to market, time to customer. And given all the overtime that we have all been putting in, it is really important that we get back into balance our work and families, because people have been spending too much time at work."

Still, that "pull back" won't necessarily be recessionary. Yost explained that while initial projections for the year 2000 had been that the economy would see at least one quarter of "negative numbers," the belief now is that overall the economy will grow 3 percent for the year. He said he could only describe that as "robust."

That was the consensus of the remainder of the panel, selected by the Economic Club to give a look ahead at business, jobs and spending for the coming year ...

at least one more year of growth before any slow down is anticipated.

In fact, Eugene Miller, chairman and CEO of Comerica Bank, said the biggest danger to the U.S. economic outlook is that "federal spending is accelerating in anticipation of the election next year. The markets no longer 'look kindly at election year.'"

Tim O'Brien, of O'Brien Waterford Construction in Pontiac, told the Economic Club he foresees a 7 percent growth in the construction industry in the Detroit area, surpassing the national expectations for the building industry. In the Detroit area, construction will continue to be dominated by "mega-projects," like casinos and sports stadiums in Detroit, he said.

"Housing starts will likely decline by about 7.5 percent. Despite that drop, the decline in units represents a number similar to what was the entire market only a few short years ago."

The biggest obstacle to construction is a shortage of labor, O'Brien said.

Floyd Hall, chairman, president and CEO of the Troy-based Kmart Corp., said that even if there is a slow down in the economy generally, an "anticipated increase in the population in the Detroit metropolitan region" will bring retailers here more customers.

The real challenge to retailers, he said, will be the growth of e-commerce, purchases made over the Internet. It won't be additional spending, he concluded.

The money spent on purchases made over the World Wide Web will be money transferred from more traditional "bricks and mortar" retailers. But, he predicted, as more traditional retailers enter the e-commerce arena, there will likely be a shakeout of companies doing business on the Web. Kmart, for instance, plans to jump into sales over the Web in the coming year, he said.

Growth in e-commerce was a theme echoed by the panelists. And Yost suggested that while business-to-consumer e-commerce is generally acknowledged to be a hot potential growth market, business-to-business e-commerce will have even greater growth potential in the future.

Miller said he believes the current booming economy can be sustained into the next century.

as long as business and political leaders remember what brought us to this point.

Miller said the Federal Reserve's "focused resolve" at keeping fluctuations in interest rates down has had much to do with that growth.

Additionally, four factors have contributed to the length and strength of the current economic boom — declining inflation and a strong dollar; streamlining of businesses, both through mergers and internal cost cutting; waves of new technology; and increased globalization of trade.

If businesses and political leaders remain focused on those areas, Miller said, it should be "more of the same" for the economy in the future.

Devine exit expected to spark rush for posts

BY PAT MURPHY
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The pending resignation of Oakland County commissioner Dan Devine Jr. will undoubtedly touch off two scrambles — one to fill his post as chair of the Republican caucus and another to replace him as representative of the 14 District which includes Bloomfield Hills and part of Bloomfield Township.

COUNTY NEWS

Both posts will likely be filled in January, if — as expected — Devine is appointed treasurer of Bloomfield Township. He is expected to replace current treasurer David Payne, who is reportedly in line to succeed township Supervisor Fred Korzon, who was to announce his resignation at Monday's town board meeting.

Devine told his colleagues on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners of his pending appointment Thursday at the GOP caucus prior to the regular board meeting. "I didn't intend to say anything that early," he said. "But news (of the pending appointment) was out, and I wanted my colleagues to know."

"I've enjoyed my tenure as commissioner, and I respect the institution," Devine said.

While the news caught some Republicans off guard, Devine said the surprise probably didn't last long.

"I'm sure people are lining up support (to be the next caucus chair) right now," he said. "There are no vacuums in politics."

The new caucus chair will be selected by Republican commissioners — in caucus — probably by the end of January.

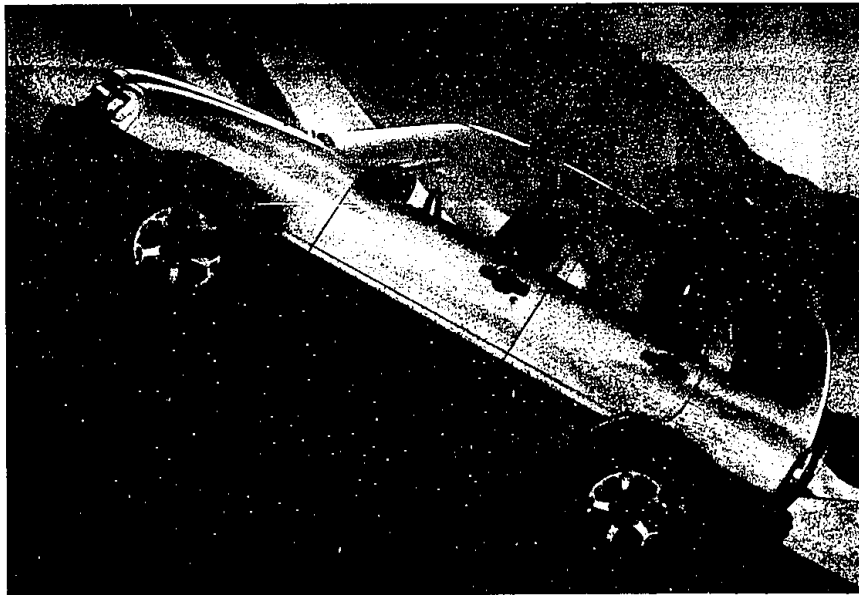
Selecting a new county commissioner will be a more public process.

Residents interested in being appointed must submit resumes and, quite likely, submit to an interview by GOP commissioners.

The successful candidate would be commissioner until August, when he or she would run in the Republican primary. He or she should also be ready for a possible Democratic challenge in November.

The option would be a special election, something commissioners believe would be too expensive.

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