

# Public safety institutes automated fine response

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When a police officer issues a ticket, significant time is spent explaining the citation and how much of a fine it entails. The communication between officer and recipient isn't always clear, due to various street noises or other factors.

And, as a result, 47th District Court receives far too many follow-up calls from recipients, asking for the same information they weren't able to understand at the time they were ticketed.

That's one reason Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss views the court's implementation of an automated response fine schedule as a positive step toward better efficiency.

"It's very user-friendly, it'll probably be easier for folks and they can listen to it in the calm of their own living room," Goss said. "Sometimes, at the moment, they don't hear what officers are saying and they get confused."

Officers and court employees will also benefit.

"It's going to make it easier for

them (officers), too," Goss added. "They won't have to go through lengthy explanations on the street."

David Walsh, administrator for 47th District Court, said the system "in the long run will work out well for everyone."

The decision to use touch tone technology followed brainstorming sessions with both city police departments. According to Walsh, input from Goss and Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer played a major role in how the system took shape.

Meanwhile, public feedback about the system, which is similar to one being used at 50th District Court in Pontiac, will be carefully evaluated and modified if it's too difficult or cumbersome for people to get a grasp of.

"I think it's another area where we're trying to use technology and, hopefully, benefit the public and make the process ... work more efficiently," Walsh said.

For the court, which serves the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills from its 10 Mile location, Goss said the automat-

ed system "will alleviate a lot of phone work," time which has been often spent repeating information recipients were given by officers.

"I think it's really the right thing to do," Goss noted. "It's a good system, the court did a good job putting it together. And it will flow a lot easier."

A secondary benefit of the system is officers won't have to worry about distributing fine schedules along with citations. For the time being, they will hand out slips of paper with the new system's phone number

when they issue citations. But, Walsh said the number eventually will be printed right on the tickets.

"Police officers never felt comfortable doing that," said Walsh, about having to explain fine schedules at the time they ticket somebody.

It's something they won't have to worry about any longer.

The automated system is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call (248) 477-9619.

## Sever from page A1

Councilman Jon Grant agreed. "I don't see it myself," Grant said. "Even if he were still a council member, I don't see that he would be precluded from working with Phoenix Land Development. He would not be able to vote on any issue that has to do with Phoenix Land Development."

City Attorney John Donohue backed up that assessment, noting Sever's consulting position doesn't violate state law or the city charter — especially since he is resigning.

Sever realizes not everyone will see it that way. He did receive payment from Schafer for his services, he said.

However, Sever's work with Schafer has not overlapped any other business the developer had before the council.

The council approved Schafer's planned unit development on 13 Mile Road in a 5-2 vote Aug. 10. Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and Councilwoman Vicki Barnett voted "no." Sever said he didn't approach Schafer about consulting until October.

"It was much later," Schafer said. "I don't do business that way."

Schafer said Sever came to him about the development of the city-owned 90-plus acres, which will include expansion of San Marino Golf Course.

The developer called the business relationship "a good match," citing Sever's numerous years on city council.

"We have our own ideas, but he was able to give some insights I might not have been able to realize," Schafer said. "I've tried to take the path of least resistance."

"I'm interested in putting a proposal out there that will be good for the community."

Schafer believes Sever has been one of his toughest critics, including on those talks that involved the Glen Oaks PUD.

Another frequent Schafer critic, Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, is not drawing any rash conclusions about the working relationship.

"I don't know if this involves direct lobbying or advice given out of the public eye," Vagnozzi said. "I'm willing to wait to see how it develops before making any judgments."

Sever's is not the first working relationship between a former councilman and a developer to raise a few eyebrows.

After leaving council, Larry Lichtman accepted a position with a law firm that represented the developer involved in the controversial Timbercrest project at Middlebelt and 12 Mile road.

Lichtman represented a different developer, Malan Realty, in a proposed commercial and residential redevelopment on Orchard Lake, 14 Mile and Northwestern.

A former elected official has no extra pull, one observer said.

## Sign up for safety forum

Farmington Hills Senior Adult Division and Farmington Hills police present a senior safety forum Monday, Nov. 9.

The forum starts at 10:30 a.m. at the Farmington Hills Senior Center, 28600 11 Mile Road.

Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer and former Channel 7 reporter Vince Wade will co-host the forum, which informs seniors how to protect themselves. Those who attend receive information on safety, scams that target seniors and how to use 911 service.

The program is open to seniors 55 and older. A complimentary lunch is available to the first 60 people who register. To pre-register, call 473-1830.

## Press a number, get your information

There are nine categories of violations from which people can choose when calling 47th District Court's new automated response fine schedule.

By pressing numbers one through nine on touch tone telephone key pads, they can find out pertinent fine information as follows:

1. Violations in construction zones, school zones and at emergency scenes.
2. Accidents resulting from a moving violation.
3. Expressway speeding violations.
4. City street speeding violations.
5. Defective equipment violations.
6. License, registration, plate or insurance violations.

7. Parking violations.
8. Alcohol-related violations.
9. Other.

For tickets involving mandatory court appearances, or for those violations not listed above, people must telephone the criminal traffic division at (248) 477-6630.

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