

Farmington Observer

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THE WEEK AHEAD

Civic: This afternoon and tonight you can celebrate the reopening of the Civic Theatre by attending one of the current theatrical releases, shown at 1940s prices.

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Panel member chided

Negotiations with Time Warner will continue but an administrative panel is also meeting to resolve franchise concerns.

By JONI HUBRED
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Though negotiations will continue, officials have begun a more formal process to renew an expired franchise agreement with the cable company that serves Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi.



If the three communities, represented as the Southwest Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC), can't resolve their differences with Time

Warner Cable, the renewal will be handled by an administrative panel. The franchise agreement, which establishes the conditions under which the company can operate in the community, expired more than two years ago.

"I think it is in the best interest of the communities that we settle this as soon as we can," said Farmington representative Dick Tupper, a former city council member. "The longer we drag it out, the longer our citizens are stuck with the kind of service and the kind of equipment we have today."

Time Warner attorney Gardner Gillespie said the company has the same goal.

"We are very much in agreement that we want this resolved as quickly as possible," he said.

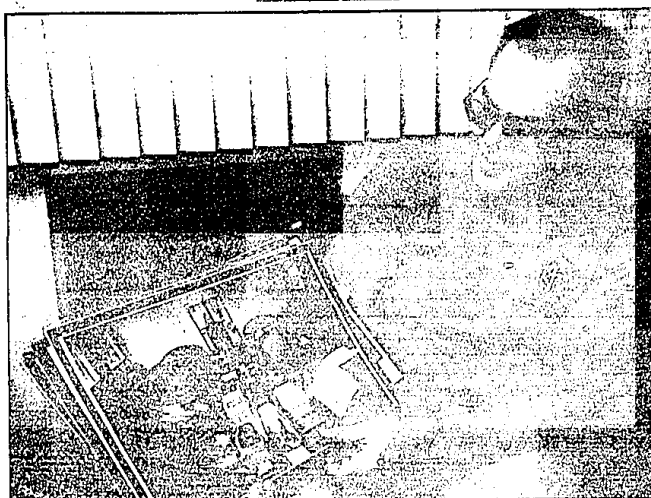
However, Time Warner started off the panel's organizational meeting by expressing a concern that could hold up the process.

"It is axiomatic that the pre-requisite for a fair and impartial hearing is to have a fair and impartial panel," Gillespie said. "When a member of the panel has taken a position and voted on it, we don't see how that member could make a fair and impartial judgment."

He pointed out that former Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, appointed to the panel last month,

Please see PANEL, A4

Mission motel



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRINKLEY

On his way: Jim Miller is headed back to Costa Rica in a few weeks. The photo he holds shows the group's sleeping accommodations in a local church.

Church volunteers set to help Tonjibe tribe in Costa Rica

By TIM SMITH
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Crammed quarters, common showers and other inconveniences await Farmington Hills resident Jim Miller and the entire "Volunteers in Mission" team, who later this month embark on an excursion to Central America.

But vacation pleasures aren't why Miller and 24 other volunteers from six Michigan-based United Methodist churches will trek to Tonjibe, Costa Rica beginning Monday, Jan. 17. Their purpose for going is to do what they can to improve the quality of life in the rural region.

"It's actually pretty comfortable," said Miller, of Birmingham First United Methodist Church, which is coordinating the effort and has the largest contingent going to Tonjibe. "They clear the church (Ton-

jibe Methodist) and we move in. And when they have church they meet outside."

Nine volunteers are going from Birmingham First United Methodist; with another eight representing Farmington Hills-based Nardin Park United Methodist.

Like a cocoon

Miller, during an interview last week, pointed at a photograph of their accommodations, taken during last year's mission trip. Men sleep on one side of the room, women on the other.

"We sleep on thick air mattresses with mosquito nets over us," Miller said last week. "You feel like you're in a cocoon."

Hot showers, in the modern sense, don't exist either. Instead, cold water becomes hot thanks to

Please see MISSION, A5

Observer welcomes new staffer

Joni Hubred has been named to the staff of the Farmington Observer, replacing Larry O'Connor.



Joni Hubred

A native of Minnesota, Hubred joined Observer & Eccentric newspapers in March 1999. Until mid-December, she had covered local government for the Oxford Eccentric.

"It's a pleasure to have Joni join our staff. Her enthusiasm is contagious. She brings a lot of experience covering home towns and I have no doubt she will be tremendously successful at the Farmington Observer," said Joanne Maliszewski, community editor.

Before moving to Michigan, Hubred served as managing editor of the Lakeville Life & Times, a weekly community newspaper serving a circulation base of approximately 25,000 homes and businesses in a southwest suburb of Minneapolis. She has 12 years' experience in government, emergency services and feature reporting.

"In my first few weeks, I've had a great time covering this diverse and interesting community," Hubred said. "Everyone has been very helpful and open, and people seem more than willing to help us cover Farmington Hills by sharing the news in their lives."

She encourages anyone with a story idea or news item to call her at 477-6450 or contact her via e-mail, jhubred@oe.homecomm.net.

Mansion gets a committee of its own

By TIM SMITH
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The Farmington City Council Monday approved the formation of an official committee to operate and maintain the Gov. Warner Mansion.

With a mission to continue increasing community awareness and use of the Grand River facility, the 15-member Warner Mansion Committee would become effective on Feb. 1.

'Everybody is working for the same purpose. To enhance the mansion and increase its utilization and raise funds. We look at it as a very, very positive development.'

Jim McGlinchy
—Committee co-chairman

Pending its start-up date, the committee essentially succeeds the similarly named ad hoc museum development

committee and also assumes some mansion-related duties of the Farmington Historical Commission.

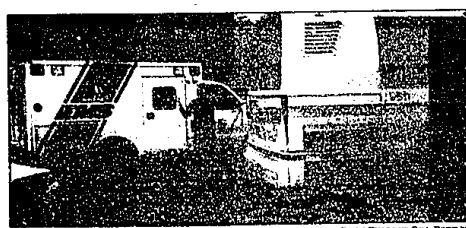
"This is a really important step," said Farmington Mayor Bill Hartsock. "Over the years it's been well maintained. But ... awareness and usage has been stepped up."

Hartsock added that he is "anxious for the committee to continue with the hard work" of the museum development committee and historical commission.

One of the 15 people expected to be

Please see WARNER, A3

On the corner



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRINKLEY

Quick response: Community Emergency Medical Services paramedics Friday came to the aid of a 32-year-old Detroit man who suffered an epileptic seizure on a SEMTA bus about 12:20 p.m. at the intersection of Grand River and Farmington roads.

Geese-tired residents want action from city

By JONI HUBRED
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Hills officials may find themselves facing a vexed house Monday night, as they discuss a proposed ordinance that will limit the feeding of certain birds within residential neighborhoods.

The move can't come too soon for Dan Walsh, who wants to know how he can recoup the losses he's suffered from what could politely be described as a "messy" problem. One of Walsh's neighbors on Tulane Avenue likes to feed birds, and she's drawn such large crowds that the droppings became a real issue.

"For three summers, I couldn't sit out

'For three summers, I couldn't sit out in the backyard, unless I had something covering my head. We couldn't grill outside, because you'd get droppings on the stuff.'

Dan Walsh
—Tulane neighbor

in the backyard, unless I had something covering my head," Walsh said.

Please see GEESE, A4

Flu cases swelling Botsford's emergency room

By JONI HUBRED
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Now that the pesky Y2K bug is out of the way, it's time to deal with another unwanted virus: influenza.

And this one's not going quietly. According to physicians at Botsford

Hospital in Farmington Hills, the flu epidemic engulfing Detroit in body aches, headaches and sniffles has pushed emergency room traffic to well over 200 patients per day.

"We are seeing an increased volume of patients who have not only influenza, but a wide variety of infectious dis-

eases," said emergency room physician Dr. Sanford Vieder. "It's Michigan's turn, and we're getting it hard."

Hospitals all across the city are full, he said.

Botsford has been running at or near capacity for more than two weeks; however, don't believe reports that

patients have been turned away. "That's an inaccuracy," Vieder explained. "What I think they're talking about is 'Status C,' which is when there are no beds available in the emergency room. Even when we are

Please see FLU, A4



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