

E-commerce plan in trouble

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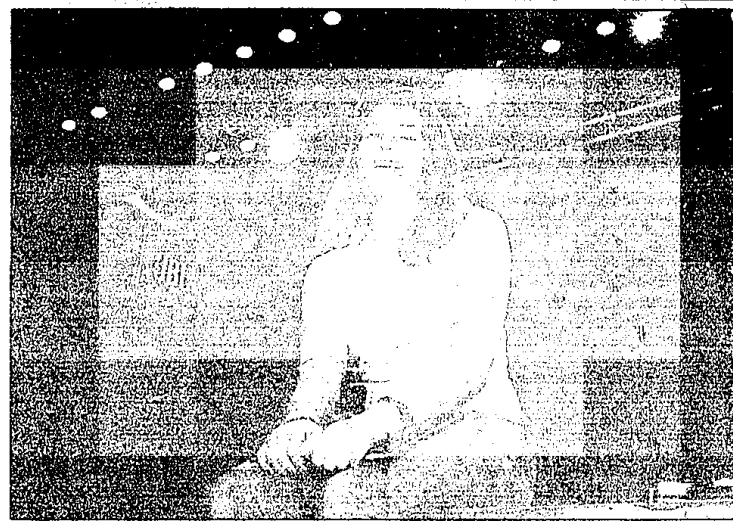
The plug is about to be pulled on an ambitious plan to launch an e-commerce program for downtown Farmington merchants.

Several factors were blamed for the apparent demise of the proposed Downtown Farmington MarketPlace. Those include poor timing and atmosphere in the community, with the proposal criticized by some for being too expensive.

There is a slim chance that the program could be revised and revived. A modified version likely will be discussed by the Farmington Downtown Development Authority at its Tuesday, April 4 meeting.

The DDA in early January announced it was teaming up with Farmington-based

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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRUNGER

Unhappy hiatus: Despite her smiles, Samantha Steckloff is not pleased that there is no spring musical at Harrison High School.

All she wants to do is act

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All Samantha Steckloff wants is a chance to do what she loves — perform on stage, and maybe enhance her potential for college scholarships and a future career.

"It's my future," Steckloff said during an interview last week. "But I can't explain the feeling of being on stage in front of the lights and in front of the audience. It's my favorite thing to do in the world."

But the Harrison High School sophomore is increasingly frustrated by the fact that this year has been a total washout from a drama perspective. There wasn't a winter drama production and her efforts to get a drama club and/or a spring musical revue off the ground didn't fly, either.

Finally, following what she described as an "unhappy experience" discussing the issues with Harrison Principal Rande Horn, she recently sent a letter to school Superintendent Bob Maxfield and school board members to express her disappointment.

"I am just a kid," wrote Steckloff, who has a strong interest in the fine arts. "I cannot force action on the part of Harrison's staff."

The student amplified on her letter during an interview last week.

"It's not just that I need it for college because I want to major in it," Steckloff said. "But going for a year without theater is so hard for me."

Steckloff, 16, described Horn as not being sympathetic during their meeting of March 6. "He said there are too many obstacles with the stage this year and with the fire code."

Double standard

She alluded to an apparent double standard for athletes and other students. "I said to (Horn), 'If we don't have a football field do we ship them to another football field? The (William) Costick Center is open.'"

On Friday, Horn said if he seemed unsympathetic to the student, that wasn't his intention.

"I'm not unsympathetic," he said. "I understand that here's an individual whose goals are to be on stage (for a career). She's in a tough spot. But when somebody asks me a question, I don't ignore it."

Horn stressed that it was hoped at the beginning of the school year that the facilities would be ready to allow for a spring musical or some kind of production. But when work did not

progress as hoped, it was decided not to "do something sloppy," and to instead wait until next fall.

The principal said he is "very confident" that Harrison's drama department will be making a strong comeback in 2000-01, complete with state-of-the-art facilities.

"Yes, there is a group of kids who will miss it," Horn said. "But we hope that next year we really knock ourselves out and make up for what we missed out on this year."

Unfortunate situation

Several other school and district officials last week said the situation wasn't mean-spirited against students such as Steckloff. But, it was merely an unfortunate case of budget issue construction making it impossible to provide students with adequate rehearsal and performing space — not to mention audience seating.

"It really hurts me that this is the situation because drama was so much a part of my high school experience," said school board President Priscilla Brouillette, who was voted best actress as a senior at East Aurora High School in Illinois. "Students have had to make a lot of sacrifices

Please see ACT, A2

Eleven Pines project scrapped

Council agrees to take new look at controversial golf course expansion and housing plan



By JONI HUBBARD
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An regards the city of Farmington Hills' initial concept plan to put in a nine-hole golf course, 362 apartments and 156 attached and townhouse condominiums on property at Halsted and 11 Mile roads, officials have a welcome word for concerned residents:

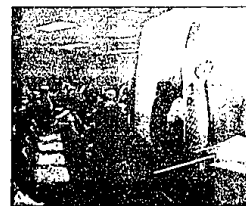
Fuggedaboudit.

Residents have been fuming for weeks over the proposed expansion of San Marino municipal golf course, as well as the housing they said came as a complete surprise. While it's not formally off the table, council members agreed at a work session Thursday night to scrap the proposal, which drew hundreds of residents to their meeting at the William Costick Activities Center.

"It's a study session so they can't make that kind of decision," City Manager Steve Brock said Friday morning. "But that's not to say the reduced plan is where we're going to land, either."

The scaled back plan eliminates the proposed upscale apartments entirely, reduces the number of attached condos from 80 to 60 and increases townhouse condos from 76 to 175. While the first

Please see PINES, A5



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRUNGER

Explanation: Hills City Manager Steve Brock explains the Eleven Pines project to a packed house.

WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Hills council: Among the agenda items is a presentation by Wally Christensen about the Korean War Era Commemorative Search. The meeting is set for 7:30 p.m. at Farmington Hills City Hall, 31555 W. 11 Mile Road.

TUESDAY

Retreat: Brain research will be discussed by the Farmington Board of Education during its spring retreat, scheduled from 5:30-9 p.m. at the Farmington Training Center, located at 33000 Thomas Street. The public is invited to attend.

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Court hearing date in sex case set for April

By JONI HUBBARD
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Jim Thompson walked into his circuit court arraignment Friday morning, hands folded, wrists handcuffed.

He was arrested Feb. 18 on charges of sexually abusing two Farmington Hills brothers.

Thompson was tethered this time to about a dozen other prisoners brought

up from the Oakland County Jail to appear before Oakland Circuit Court Judge Deborah Tyner.

Thompson conferred briefly with his attorney, Thomas Warshaw, before Tyner entered the courtroom to set the date for his preliminary hearing.

Prosecutor Chuck Snell asked for a "long date," to allow authorities time to go through the hundreds of video and audio tapes found in Thompson's home

the night he was arrested.

Acting on a tip from an alert Farmington school bus driver, police set up a surveillance of Thompson's activities, which they say included cruising through neighborhoods, school bus stops and any area where young boys would gather.

In 47th District Court testimony, the brothers testified Thompson would put a tape recorder on their laps while they

drove around in his red Dodge Viper sports car, then touch their inner thighs or genitals while he was adjusting the position of the recorder. Police say they've found more than 30 years' worth of evidence.

"We're still going through hundreds of audio and video tapes," Snell told Judge Tyner. "We'd ask the court set a pretrial in May."

Please see CASE, A4



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRUNGER

Walking the halls: Longacre principal Bill Smith and Jenkins Edware head for a visit to the new media center.

Leadership

They see how it's done

By TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
STAFF WRITER

Jenkins Edware has wanted to be an elementary school teacher since he was in ninth grade.

"I used to think teachers were in their own little world, but once I got to know them personally I knew that was what I wanted to do," said the Farmington High School senior. "For instance, Mr. (PHS principal John) Barrett gets really personal with students. That's what I like."

Pursuing his dream, Edware took part in Farmington Public Schools' districtwide Students Operating Schools

event Friday. The eighth annual event allows high school students to acquaint themselves with the responsibilities of the people who run Farmington's public schools, from bus drivers to the superintendent.

Edware chose Longacre Elementary School because his brother and sister attended the school. He shadowed principal Bill Smith.

"What makes it so much more exciting for me is that Jenkins has an interest in education," Smith said, seated across the table from the professionally dressed student in the teachers'

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It's time to find a bargain in today's HomeTown Classifieds!

