

THE WEEK AHEAD

Hills City Council: Officials will meet in a study session at 6 p.m. Monday to discuss a contract with Community Emergency Medical Services, Inc. (CEMS) and an ordinance to establish a Youth Council. The regular agenda, taken up at 7:30 p.m. in Council chambers, includes a hearing on the Community Development Block Grant plan and projected use of funds, an annual report from RRRASOC and consideration of a change in the CEMS contract, going to a month-to-month basis.

TUESDAY

School Board: The Farmington Board of Education will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 27 at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street. The Board will honor PTA Reflections Contest award winners, review curriculum recommendations and consider recommendations for schools of choice, the Gill Year-Round Program, Blue Ribbon Financial Strategies recommendations and board and millage election resolutions.

ARTS & LEISURE

Duelling musicals: Ragtime and Smokey Joe's Cafe roll into town for openings this Tuesday in Detroit.

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Retail center agreement inked



A draft agreement for a shopping center in the northeast corner of Farmington Hills has been approved, paving the way for as much as 370,000 square feet of commercial development by Grand Sakwa Acquisitions.

By JONI HUBERD
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After two weeks of tweaking, officials and developers have finally come up

with a deal that could eventually place 370,000 square feet of retail development in the northeast corner of Farmington Hills. Council members had tabled a draft

Planned Unit Development agreement with Grand Sakwa Acquisitions after calling a meeting to consider it on March 5. Since then, the developer and residents have been working with the city to remove several bones of contention raised at that meeting. "Maybe the two weeks were very well spent," said councilwoman Vicki Barnett. "I see some changes here I probably would have suggested if I'd have thought of it."

The agreement spells out the types of uses allowed on the Phase I property over which Grand Sakwa currently has control, in the 14 Mile/Orchard Lake/Northwestern area. In addition, it obligates Grand Sakwa to \$3.5 million in road improvements and \$2.6 million in storm water control. City manager Steve Brock said the project includes a number of other public benefits:

Please see 14 MILE, A2

What lies beneath



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLER

Suitable for framing: Travelling Pictures' Sam Marrocco goes over digitized images, frame by frame to create special effects for the hit movie, "Castaway."

SFX

Hills firm works on box-office hits

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
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Establishing a motion picture clientele for a Michigan-based business isn't easy, but Farmington Hills resident David Burton appears to have done it.

Burton is the co-founder of Travel-

ling Pictures, a special-effects house based for the last five years "in the old Jehovah's Witness building" on the southeast corner of Orchard Lake and Shilohwasee.

Burton and business partner John Willette developed enough contacts in the commercial effects business that they were recommended for

work on the movie *What Lies Beneath*, which led to work on *Castaway*. Both movies happened to share the same director, Robert Zemeckis.

You may not think films outside the realm of science fiction need

Please see PICTURES, A1

Gill all-year all but over

By TIM SMITH
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The Gill Year-Round program is on life support. It's last breath could be Tuesday night.

On Tuesday, the Farmington Board of Education will vote on a recommendation from Superintendent Bob Maxfield to discontinue a program that remains immensely popular with parents, students and staff members - but not popular enough to attract the number of new students required to keep it going. The board meeting is 7:30 p.m. at Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street.

A number of dedicated parents plan on being at the meeting, in a last-ditch attempt to sway the board to their way of thinking. "There's still a school board meeting," said parent Timothy Heffron, a resident in the Hillside Elementary School attendance area whose daughter, Elizabeth, attends third grade at Gill Year-Round. "It doesn't necessarily have to be a rubber stamp."

Maxfield delivered the "death sentence" during Wednesday night's meeting with parents and staffers. Then, for nearly two hours, the superintendent and Gill Elementary School Principal Gayle Zimmerer fielded questions and listened to comments from the group of disappointed, disill-

Please see GILL, A3

Police seek suspect in motel armed robberies

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
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Armed robberies of two Farmington Hills motels last week appear to have been committed by the same man.

In both cases, the man asked the clerk about the price of a room, then left when he got the answer. In both cases, he returned a couple minutes later to ask if they had Jacuzzi rooms, then left when he got the answer. In both cases he returned, brandished a gun and said, "I don't want to hurt you. Just give me the money."

The first robbery occurred just after midnight Wednesday, March 21, at the Comfort Inn on 12 Mile at Orchard Lake. The clerk gave the robber \$352.

The second occurred at 7:38 p.m. Thursday, March 22, at the Motel 6, 38300 Grand River. The clerk managed to get away and call police from a guest's room while the manager gave the robber \$380.

The robber was described as black, 6-foot tall, 150-180 pounds, thin with short hair, slanted eyes and a round face. He wore a dark-colored windbreaker and dark pants.

Police believe the same suspect has hit businesses in Livonia and Southfield. Crime prevention is contacting motels with details and a composite sketch of the suspect.



When an armed robbery occurs, police advise the following:

- Keep it short and smooth. The longer a robbery takes, the more nervous the robber becomes.
- Obey the robber's orders. Robbers seldom hurt people who cooperate with them.
- Tell the robber about any possible surprises. If you must reach for something or move in any way, talk about what you're going to do.
- Call the police. Don't hang up until they tell you to.

Police can provide a suspect description form, which should be filled out as soon as possible. Anyone with information about the crimes is asked to call 473-9687.

Oklahoma!



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLER

NOT GUILTY! Students from Harrison High School are in rehearsals for their spring musical, "Oklahoma!", which opens Thursday. Pictured above, Judge Andrew Carnes (Mark Shirey) declares Carly (Alex Springs) not guilty in an impromptu trial. His girlfriend Laurey (Amber Bahr, at right) and Aunt Ella (Samantha Steckloff, at left) are overjoyed by the verdict. This marks the return of the musical, which wasn't presented last year because a stage wasn't available during construction.