

# Farmington Observer & Eccentric

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Fifteen Cents



William Green demonstrates his fire escape for trailers. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

## Hills businessman develops escape hatch for mobile home

By SUSAN AVERILL

is, you aren't going to save them."

FARMINGTON HILLS—"In the last two fires I've been to, a 21-year-old died and a 17-year-old boy was trapped with one arm out the window. That's all the farther he got—just one arm out the window," William Green said sadly.

Green owns William M. Green, Inc., a windstorm and fire repair business in Farmington Hills, and he must constantly travel to the sites of charred homes and trailers.

It wasn't the first time he'd seen something like that, but when his doctor ordered a rest and vacation last year, Green had time to ponder fire deaths. It was then that he developed the idea of a trapdoor accessible to not only adults, but also children and invalids.

"I knew that there had to be a way to get out. You have to be out in not more than 40 seconds from the time you first sense danger.

"A fire will totally destroy a mobile home in two minutes," he said. "Alarm and sprinkler systems you can have, but if you don't get the people out of the area where the fire

"THE BIGGEST percentage of victims are children and invalids, and the majority of persons are trapped in bedrooms," he said.

"The last few fires I've been to in Brighton and Howell, they've found people huddled into a corner or under the bed, trying to escape the smoke," he said.

The victims are essentially correct in trying to avoid the smoke and stay as close to the floor as possible, but they still have no means of escape.

A race from the bedroom to the front door will generally mean a trip right through the flame to a door that is hopelessly warped shut by the heat. It's then that panic sets in, and Green is convinced panic, more than anything else, is the culprit in the majority of deaths.

"When you don't have to leave the bedroom and remember to turn knobs, you eliminate panic and save lives," Green said.

Green's trapdoor is a 26 inch by three foot rectangle stamped from a

single piece of metal which can be panelled on the inside to match the room's interior.

TO OPEN the door, one must flick down a lever and push. It will open ramp-style, but will hang anywhere from one to eight inches from the ground outside.

It's weatherstripped and may be locked from the inside to prevent burglars. Feet, shoulders, heads and almost anything else may be used to punch the door open, which, Green said, makes it invaluable for both children and invalids.

"If anyone is crippled, they don't have to use their hands to open it. And children don't need to know how to open a door, or even be tall enough, for that matter.

"It's low enough so that if a homeowner took the time to explain and demonstrate its use to his children, they could all get out safely."

But by its very nature, then, the device lends itself to playtime.

"WELL," Green said, "it's better to have a kid open it and get hauled out a couple of times by his parents than

to have him not know how to use it and die in a trailer fire."

His trapdoor would come accompanied by instructions for the homeowner who might use it up to an hour and a half of his own time to install it. The major operation, he said, would be cutting the proper hole in the wall.

After applying for his patent, he discovered that the last trapdoor resembling his was developed for an 1803 boxcar and had a rope which lowered the ramp, drawbridge-style.

He foresees the door's use in nursing homes, mobile homes, trailers and campers. It might make him a lot of money, but Green said he wouldn't care, as long as it was successful in saving lives.

Green said he decided to follow through on his idea after watching a number of his daydreams turned into reality by other people. And since his trapdoor is reality, the ideas haven't stopped flowing.

"I can be sitting, watching TV and BOOM, another idea. I've put one (patent) in for an escape route for high rises, but I won't tell you what it is because you won't believe me," he grinned.

## Farmington may request tax increase

By JUDY OWEN

FARMINGTON—City council members will be studying a proposed budget which may mean a one-half mill tax increase.

Councilmen received the 46-page budget recommendations at the meeting Monday night. Approval of the budget must come by May 19.

The \$15 million package actually represents a decrease from the 1974-75 budget.

The recommended budget will require a one-half mill tax increase to meet projected expenditures. City Manager Robert Deadman said.

"THE CURRENT inflation, coupled with the recessionary trend, has affected local government costs and income as severely as it has affected most businesses and industries," Deadman said.

"After three years of being able to offset the rising costs of providing city services within the same tax rate, we find that this year's anticipated revenues will not cover projected expenditures.

Some of the increased costs have been offset from increased assessed valuation on real property, he said. However, sources of revenue other than taxes have kept pace to offset the rising costs of operation.

About 55 per cent of the city's operational funding is dependent on taxes.

THE PRESENT economic conditions have also affected the amount of funds available through the state and federal revenue sharing programs.

Reduced construction and building activity has limited the amount of revenue received through building permits. Only three new home starts were recorded by the city's building department for the first quarter of 1975.

The revenues from the state gas and weight taxes are expected to increase only two or three per cent.

Deadman said that budget expenditures have been kept to a minimum with a continuation of only those programs and services that are presently being offered.

"THERE ARE no new employment positions anticipated within this budget," he said. "The federal CETA program employees who are hired are scheduled to be phased out as the program funds are exhausted.

Anticipated salary increases for city employees will also be affected by the tight budget.

Increases are projected to be less than the present cost-of-living factor.

The same factors which have inflated the costs of providing the city services have also affected our employees' living costs, he said. The recommended salary increases are approximately seven per cent for all job classifications.

The city's public safety officers stand to gain under this proposal.

THE PRESENT budget requires a 4.8-per cent increase, but this contract was negotiated at the time of the wage and price freeze, Deadman said.

Recent inflation and the fact that neighboring communities have adjusted the wages of their police and firemen to a much greater extent than the current terms provided within our contract makes the present provisions inequitable," Deadman said.

The proposed budget projects a reduction in capital expenditures from last year. Equipment and land improvements will, for the most part, be funded through the city's share of state revenue sharing and federal development funds.

Some of these improvements which have already been scheduled include upgrading Shawwassee Park facilities, construction of the mini park on Vislet Street near Grand River and construction of added parking for the civic center area.

A NEW PUMPER truck is expected to be in the hands of safety department officials in November.

The department's reserve program is expected to expand in the coming fiscal year, Deadman said. Fifteen persons are expected to be added to that group's manpower.

The reserves are being trained for both police and fire operations. Upon completion of training, the program will have 25 officers available to supplement the regular officers in police and fire responsibilities.

The added manpower will provide the department with the potential to turn out 47 firemen and three pumper trucks for a fire to improve the city's firefighting manpower by 50 per cent.

Deadman said that the conversion has saved the department 400 hours in meter reading time.

## New FEA representative prefers smaller size

By SUSAN AVERILL

FARMINGTON—Why would the executive director of an education association twice the size of the Farmington Education Association (FEA) come to this district?

"It's a different organization, a different setup. I felt my interest was in serving teachers as a single unit," said Richard Ringstrom, the new FEA executive director.

Formerly executive director of the Minneapolis, Minn., education association, Ringstrom bargained for about 1,300, less than half of that district's teachers. Farmington has approximately 700 teachers in both secondary and elementary schools.

Other Minneapolis teachers were

represented by a local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers.

The move to Farmington meant a less complex job and an opportunity to serve teachers in a state recognized as one of the leaders of public employee bargaining.

Ringstrom spent three and a half years as a history, government and economics teacher in St. Charles, Mo., before taking a full-time job with that education association.

The job change, he insisted, was not an escape, but a logical progression of interests.

"It's not that I'm no longer interested in teaching. I think education is very exciting and I enjoy working with kids. But I think that for the first time, teachers are coming into their

own as a profession," Ringstrom wanted to be there to help it happen.

"Teachers used to go home and take an extra job at night to make enough money. It's a generally recognized fact that the teacher is a dedicated individual, but he must support a family.

"Committing are beginning to realize this and bring the pay scale up," he said.

Educators have substituted for too long on the compliments of parents and are just now beginning to be paid what they're worth, he said.

"I started teaching in January of 1971 at a yearly salary of \$5,700. At that time, it was far below the basic family income. But there has been progress.

"Now I see teaching growing and maturing as a profession, and it's a personal satisfaction to watch something like this grow. I'm not climbing on a white stallion and raising the banner high nor do I mean to be overzealous. In any community, people

really do have a great deal of respect for teachers."

But the respect doesn't outweigh some of the other problems and present disadvantages of the job, such as the paperwork a teacher must wade through—something for which Ringstrom has a great deal of distaste.

"About 50 per cent of a teacher's day is spent in non-teaching activities like attendance, record-keeping, shuffling papers and assignment."

When it comes to money, not only teachers, but education as a whole has been shortchanged, he said.

"Education is a shortchanged resource in that of the gross national product, we spend only a minuscule amount—five per cent—on education. And this on all forms of education from the womb to the grave and from both private and public sources."

Part of the blame, he said, rests with the national and communal attitude toward education.

"Education always just a 'somehow' sort of thing. Everything always 'somehow' gets done. 'Somehow' we get enough books for this or that program. 'Somehow' we get enough money, and 'somehow' we get by with a standard textbook for all kids in the ninth grade," he said.

But even somehow doesn't excuse mistakes and inadequacies which permeate the system.

"I think it's a crime that we graduate functional illiterates. In California, a mother is suing on behalf of her son who graduated with only a fourth grade reading proficiency and no skills to offer on the job market."

(See FEA, next page)



Richard Ringstrom will head Farmington Education Association. (Staff photo)

### Definitions for fashion

FASHION (fash-un) for men and women is the subject of the special section in this issue of The Observer & Eccentric. "Fashion definitions" discusses the trends for spring reported by fashion editor Chris Walden. Special sections photographer Barbara McClellan and Ms. Walden covered the fashion presentations in New York earlier this spring and this is their visual and verbal report of what they saw.

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