

# Farmington Observer

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## Weight test never performed on fallen roof

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

City officials failed to order a routine weight test last year on the Farmington Hills City Hall roof which recently collapsed.

The test, considered standard procedure by roofing contractors, is designed to determine how much weight a structure can support.

However, representatives of three firms contacted last year to add a second roof to correct heat loss and leaking problems at City Hall say the check was never requested by the city.

"The recommendation I made was that an engineering firm be employed

to measure the loading capacity," said William Strand, technical consultant for Roofing Industry Promotion Funds, a non-profit contractor's organization.

"Obviously, no check was made. The roof collapsed because there were two roofs on a building that couldn't support the weight."

"It definitely wasn't up to code and they should have caught that, added Strand.

"I DON'T KNOW that they would even know how to conduct a weight check or that anyone would know how to, although I suppose they could have computed the weight," said City Manager Lawrence Savage.

Theoretically, there is a 30-pound-per-square-inch minimum service load," he added.

It is the responsibility of Building and Zoning Superintendent Richard Miller to maintain the roof, and it was Miller who dealt with engineers and builders when the roof was put on, Savage said.

According to Miller, a weight test was waived because "qualified people were selected and they more or less re-constructed the original roof."

Bill Hamilton, of Hamilton Roofing Co. in Plastock, hired to do last year's construction, said a weight check should have been done by Neyer, Tiseo and Hindo Ltd., the engineering firm

contracted by the city.

"We just did the work according to specifications," said Hamilton. "I thought a test had been done by Neyer. Weight checks are the responsibility of an engineering firm, not the contractor."

Hamilton opposed the addition of a second roof in the first place.

"It's much cheaper than tearing off the original roof and rebuilding it, but it adds too much weight to a roof. You get a better roof job when you just start over," said Hamilton.

"I'm not surprised the roof collapsed, considering that added weight plus the snowfall."

Hamilton estimated a \$10,000 savings was realized by installing a second roof.

Neyer Roofing manager Mike Matthers disclaimed responsibility for the weight test, saying Neyer was contracted to operate for inspection purposes only.

"A weight check is something the roofing consultant should mention and the owner should think about," Matthers said. "All we did was verify that the city got what it paid for in accordance with plans and specifications."

CNA Insurance, Farmington Hills insurance carrier, will cover the cost of reconstruction minus the \$1,000 deductible, even though the weight check was overlooked.

"There's nothing in the policy that would exclude that," said Frank Clapson of CNA's Farmington Insurance Agency.

"We have to pay the loss, period. But if something was done erroneously, we may look to recover costs from the third party."

"There's always that chance if fault is found with one or several contractors, agreed CNA Senior Claims Representative Henry Vili.

If negligence is established, CNA will present a claim to the insurance company of the responsible firm, he said.

## Board choice causes rift at city hall

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

A gaffe by Farmington Hills Mayor Jack Burwell in not notifying the vice chairman of the zoning board of appeals he would be replaced has caused a political stir among city officials.



Jack Burwell

"IF PEOPLE are interested, they ought to indicate their interest to me. I'm the mayor," said Burwell. "It's my responsibility to go out and hustle."

Burwell claims that all board appointees who contacted him were re-appointed.

Zoning chairman Jim Ellis contacted Burwell by letter indicating a vacancy was upcoming.

"I don't think it means that Tesner was leaving the position for some reason, or I heard a rumor to that effect," said Burwell.

BUT TESNER denies he ever indicated to anyone that he wished to leave the zoning board. He was elected vice chairman this past summer.

He did talk with Ellis about re-appointment, indicating he was interested in continuing on the board, he said.

"I don't think there has ever happened before on this zoning board. Normally, people come out with some sort of acknowledgement or recognition for what they have done. I never heard from the new mayor, Burwell, or Wolf. I never heard from a soul," said Tesner.

He refused to speculate on whether Egypt's appointment was politically motivated, commenting only "draw your own conclusions."

Councilmember Jan Dolan called Tesner following Egypt's appointment and tell him the council had been unaware of his interest in reappointment.

"IN THE past, appointees have been called and I assumed that was done. If it's not done in the future, there's going to be more questioning at the council level," said Dolan.

"I would like to see the city open up front," she said.

Burwell lauded Tesner for the job he had done on the board, but said Egypt is highly qualified and he doesn't regret appointing her.

"She's an extremely eager, hard-working girl and has served conscientiously as a zoning board member," he said.

Tesner has lived in Farmington Hills since 1967. He is unaligned politically with any of the local factions. He was appointed three years ago after sending in a resume expressing interest.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

### Bringing a message

National leader of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) Carol Lightner came to town this week to speak out against what she feels are too lenient drunk driving laws. Her appearance on WXYZ's Kelly

and Company brought out many area residents who plan on forming branches in this area. To read more about their efforts, please turn to Page 3A.

## Students map strategy Reagan cuts spurs mobilization

By Steve Barnaby  
editor

A University of Michigan law student is organizing a statewide petition drive to protest President Ronald Reagan's proposed cuts in student aid.

Approximately 60 percent of students at both the University of Michigan and Michigan State University receive some kind of financial assistance, according to education officials.

The students hope to gather the signatures within three to four weeks.

"We really think we can get it done. A lot of students are beneficiaries," says Balberman.

The petition drive will coincide with

them know how Michigan residents feel about the proposed cutbacks, says Balberman.

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"We really think we can get it done. A lot of students are beneficiaries," says Balberman.

All of these universities have large graduate student enrollments, the college population which many experts believe will be the most affected.

Nearly half of this country's graduate students receive guaranteed student loans (GSL). Many of these loans go to students from families with incomes of more than \$30,000 annually.

Although several programs are involved in the proposed cuts, the one which will have the biggest impact in suburban areas will be the Guaranteed



Nicky Balberman

Student Loans (GSL). Many of these loans go to students from families with incomes of more than \$30,000 annually. The Reagan plan would tighten up financial guidelines and require the loans be taken out at the going commercial rate.

## Calls them inhumane

## Brodhead fights cutback to disabled

Congressman William Brodhead, D-Detroit, has introduced a bill to reverse a ruling by the Social Security Administration which would cut off supplemental Security Income payments to thousands of aged, blind and disabled in Michigan and throughout the nation.

As of Feb. 1, the administration began a new practice of cutting off any future checks to recipients who owe the government money because of past overpayments.

The overpayments may be the result of government error or innocent mistakes by the recipients. The SSI program provides assistance to aged, blind and disabled persons with minimum income and assets under \$1,500 (\$2,250 if a married couple).

Under this new practice, all checks would be withheld until the recipient repays the full amount of indebtedness.

"I can't conceive of a more inhumane and heartless policy than to cut off this minimum assistance to the aged, blind,

and disabled. For many people, these checks are the only things that prevent malnutrition and great suffering during a hard winter," Brodhead said.

"If that is the policy of our government, then we need to change it — and change it fast."

Under Brodhead's bill, the SSI checks of people who had received overpayments due to government error or innocent mistakes could be reduced by no more than 25 percent until the indebtedness is repaid.

The Social Security Administration has always allowed these debts to be repaid gradually in the past," Brodhead said. "I believe this is the only policy which makes any sense."

There are 41,000 SSI recipients in Wayne County and 1,500 cases of outstanding overpayments in that total. It's estimated that Wayne County overpayments amount to \$30,000.

Brodhead said that he would seek speedy action on his bill and that he

had written to the Social Security Administration asking for a delay of the new debt collection practice at least until the bill has been acted upon.

## Man's body found on Halsted Road

The body of Albert Dumka, 18, of Wolverine Lake was found by a friend at Bonneville Skating Center on Halsted Road at 12:30 p.m. Sunday. The friend, who had accompanied Dumka Friday night, began a search in the area Sunday after attempting to reach Dumka during the weekend were unsuccessful.

The two were together until 1:30 a.m. Saturday when Dumka's friend left the location, Farmington Hills Detective

Gary Hawald said.

Results of an autopsy are expected in four to six weeks when toxicology reports will be complete, according to officials at the Oakland County Medical Examiner's office.

"There are no marks on the body indicating foul play, nor do we have any reason to believe he was in bad health," added Hawald. "Exposure was an element, but the investigation will be pending until we hear more from the medical examiner."

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what's inside

### I WANTED TO SELL MY CAR FAST

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One ad in the Observer & Eccentric Classifieds and her car was sold!

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