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Test pinpoints leaks

City to 'smoke out' flooding problems in Bel Aire homes

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Basement flooding in the Bel Aire subdivision may become Farmington history after city officials follow through with a "smoke testing" plan.

The Farmington City Council voted unanimously Monday night to allocate \$6,000 to an engineering firm that will use "smoke devices" to pinpoint leaks and deterioration in the subdivision's sewer system.

For the past two years, the subdivision has experienced an unusual number of sewer backups during storms, apparently because the outlet for its sanitary system was undersized when it was constructed, City Manager Robert Deadman told the council.

A relief sewer system built in the 1960s remedied the problem, but it has worsened recently with excessive flow of storm water into the sanitary system through defective pipe joints and deteriorated manholes.

Flow into the system must be controlled because its capacity during storms is limited, said Deadman.

THE TEST, which has been used successfully in Livonia,

- induces smoke into the sewers in the street with a gasoline-powered blower placed over a manhole;
- fills the sewer pipe with smoke, which escapes through cracks or holes in pipes and manholes;
- causes smoke to escape from sewer pipes through downspouts, drain pipes or other sewer connections; and
- dissipates smoke after about 20 minutes.

After leaks are located, repairs can be made.

Residents, fire and police departments will be notified before testing. Prior to the test, homeowners will be asked to run water down their drains to fill the traps. The water prevents smoke from entering homes through the sewer line.

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If smoke does enter a home through a drain, residents are advised to pour water down the drain until the smoking stops. The vapor is non-toxic and won't stain porcelain fixtures or draperies.

Another available sewer testing system discussed by the council utilizes television surveillance of pipes and manholes.

"That might make good footage for our local access cable TV stations," quipped council member William Hartsock.

Deadman disagreed, calling films of water flow "pretty boring."

Using the smoke testing procedure will enable the city to identify and repair road damage near manholes, said Deadman.

Water seeping into deteriorating manholes in roads has in some cases caused the pavement to collapse, he said.

Consulting engineers Orchard, Papke, Hillis and McCliment Inc. estimate the Bel Aire sanitary sewer is about 15,000 lineal feet with 75 manholes.

The \$6,000 they'll charge to do the smoke testing (20 cents per foot and \$25 per manhole inspection) will be paid from the city's water and sewer fund.



A Day for Love

We at the Farmington Observer wish you the happiest of times in celebrating Valentine's Day with those you love.

Couple prove that you're never too old to fall in love

By Mary Connolly, Szczyzny
staff writer

Today is Valentine's Day. But Adam Uhl of Bloomfield Township said he received his Valentine Oct. 16.

That was the day Uhl, 75, married Marian Ward, 71, at St. Hugo of the Hills Church.

"It gives you an entirely different outlook on life, especially when you've been living by yourself," Uhl said of the

marriage. "It makes you feel like you want to do things. You have an incentive. I had to come 700 miles to find this lovely lady."

Uhl, a lifelong resident of Maryland, moved to Bloomfield Hills in 1981 to be near the family of his son Eugene. Widowed for four years after 50 years of marriage, he found himself "moose and melancholy." The move to a new town as a retiree without friends was "extremely difficult."

"When I came here I had no one — no friends or anyone else. When I went back to Baltimore so many of my friends had died," Uhl recalled.

Uhl joined Mature Minglers, a senior citizen group in Bloomfield and West Bloomfield townships. It was there he met Marian Ward of Bloomfield Township.

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Sign quest goes before council

After more than a year of battling city administrators to have a "stop" sign erected in their neighborhood, a group of disgruntled residents is taking its battle to Farmington Hills City Council Monday night.

Two children have been injured in the last year after being struck by automobiles. One child, injured in early December, is in hospital and being treated for a broken neck.

The neighborhood is in the southeast section of Farmington Hills bounded by Nine Mile on the south, 10 Mile on the north, Orchard Lake on the west and Middlebelt on the east.

The residents, in cooperation with the local Larkshire Elementary School PTA, have gathered more than 300 signatures requesting that four "stop" signs be put up.

Some residents believed the signs would be erected after the area streets were paved, according to protest spokesman Herb Balko. But upon completion in September, "yield" signs were installed instead.

"We've talked with a lot of residents. We would like to have the cars stop in order to make it a safer route," said Balko.

The group is requesting that "stop" signs be posted on the intersections of Lamar and Hayes; Springbrook and Lamar; Lamar and Tuck; and Fink and Tuck.

City officials deny that "stop" signs were ever promised.

Whether an intersection receives a "stop" or "yield" sign is determined after city officials make a traffic survey of the area.

Kids' friend remembers early days of television



By Karen Hermes Smith
staff writer

At age 71, Clare Cummings still has tricks up his sleeves.

Although retired as Milky the Clown, the man who entertained millions of Detroit area youngsters on the Twin Pines-sponsored television show "Milky's Party Time" in the 1950s and 1960s, Cummings continues to study magic, learn new tricks and give some performances.

"It's the entertainment value," said the Beverly Hills resident, explaining his fascination since childhood with performing magic. "It's a way of entertaining without having any talent."

Cummings is particular about his audiences these days — most of his performances are for friends or causes he sympathizes with.

On April 30, he will appear at a program on home safety and security put on by the Village of Beverly Hills in Groves High School. His "Milky's Party Time" shows, which used to ask viewers the magic word (Twin Pines), concluded with safety tips for kids.

Last fall, he performed for a group of recovering alcoholics in Tampa, Fla.

Cummings said he is overcoming a 10-year drinking problem and has not had a "serious" drink in 1½ years.

CUMMING'S father bought him his first magic set after young Cummings, then about 13, had been impressed with a performance by two well-known magicians, Howard Thurston and Theo Hardeen (Hardeen's brother).

That afternoon, after a morning of practice with his new set, Cummings gathered some neighborhood youngsters together and put on his first magic show. "It must have been terrible," Cummings laughed, recalling the short practice session.

Later, Cummings supplemented the \$1.25 Mysto Magic set with three decks of trick cards his father had and a wagon load of magic apparatus he got from a part-time magician who was moving from Birmingham.

Cummings began giving magic shows around Birmingham, where he grew up. Among his mementos is a poster advertising his 1929 appearance in the Baldwin Public Library.

He also joined the International

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Watch for our
Bridal Section
in
today's issue

Among Clare Cummings' mementos is this photograph of Milky the Clown's 8th anniversary celebration. Pictured with Cummings are Mary Lou (Yvonne Miller) and Bob Leslie, who were regular

show characters. Miller coordinated the talent show and Leslie, dressed as a milkman, did many of the commercials.