

# Farmington Observer

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## Sewage flows in the streets

By Tom Boer  
staff writer

To the casual eye, everything seems in order in Farmington Hills' Lincolnshire subdivision.

The spacious lawns are beginning to green up now in the first days of May, and buds can be seen on most of the trees. But some residents would use a sense other than sight to evaluate conditions in their subdivision.

For example, Lynne Ulrich, who lives on Castlereigh, will tell you that there was something definitely rotten in Lincolnshire. That something was the raw sewage in her basement and on her lawn following the recent heavy rain storms.

The Ulrichs and other residents of low-lying Lincolnshire areas have a problem. After a heavy rain, the storm sewers overflow the sanitary sewers.

The mixture of sewage and rain water then overburdens the Farmington Interceptor — the huge sewer line running underneath nearby Middlebelt Road — and backs up into the residents' basements.

"It comes out of the basement trap like a geyser," Ulrich said. "We've had four-to-six feet of water in some basements around here."

The solution, as carried out by the Oakland County Department of Public Works (DPW), is almost as odious as the problem as far as the residents are concerned.

"THE ONLY RELIEF we can get for our basements is to call Oakland County," Ulrich said. "They come out with these huge pumps. They stick (a hose) down a manhole and pump (the sewage) into the street."

"Nobody likes it... nobody likes sewage in the streets. But it's either there or in the basements."

A county pump was stationed at a manhole at the end of Ulrich's driveway last week. The contents of the sewer, including bits of toilet paper, could be seen on parts of the front lawn.

"Our grass is long — we haven't had a chance to cut it yet — and it acted like a filter for that sewage," she said.

"Now I've got poop and toilet paper and God knows what else in my yard, in my driveway and all over the street."

Residents believe that the Interceptor and the lines leading to it from subs like Lincolnshire are "frantically inadequate," in Ulrich's words.

The problem isn't limited to Lincolnshire. A similar situation exists in the Kendallwood and West Brook subdivisions bordered by Orchard Lake, Farmington, 12 Mile and 13 Mile roads.

"That Farmington Interceptor services all of Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield Township, all the way to Keego Harbor," said Jim Porter of the Oakland County DPW. "The interceptor is full, actually more than full, as it goes by Lincolnshire."

RELIEF, ACCORDING to Porter, isn't likely until the county gets some federal money to pay for the construction of special reservoirs to hold the overflow. Some officials estimate the project could cost as much as \$90 million.

"There are certain trouble areas in this district," Porter said, "and we plan to treat these areas individually. But, chances are, nothing's going to happen unless federal money can be pumped into the project."

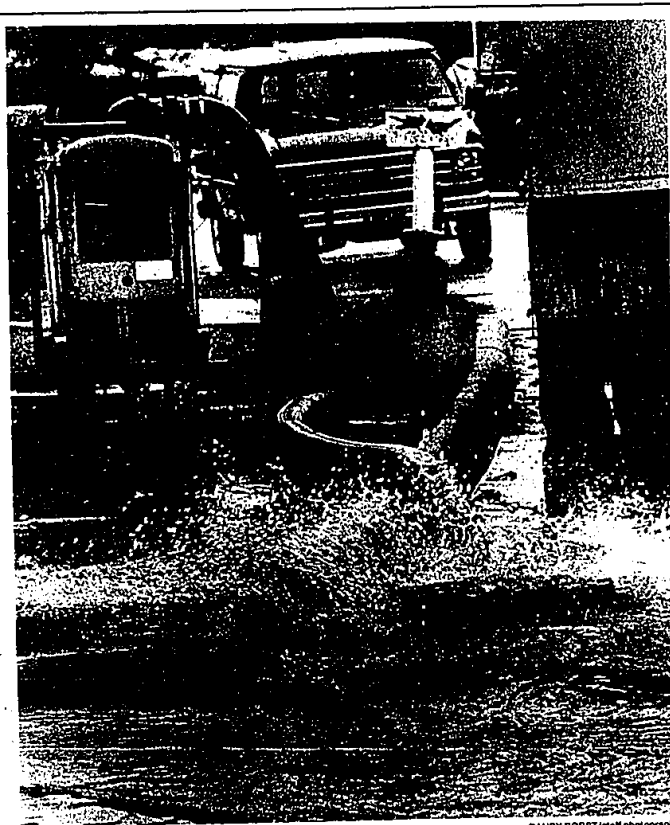
"We've applied for federal grants, but as of today we've not received them."

Meanwhile, residents of the affected subdivisions are scrubbing down their basement walls and floors, raking the sewage out of their lawns, and watching the skies for rain clouds.

"I mean, not yourself! In our position," Ulrich said. "These are approximately \$100,000 homes, and we have sewage in our streets."

"Like one of the neighbors said, 'This is America in 1983, and we have sewage in the streets.'"

Ulrich continued, "There's a move around here to get property taxes lowered, at least on a house-to-house basis. Our value just isn't what it should be."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

A pumping device like this one is being used by the county to combat sewage overflow into the basements in Lincolnshire subdivision. While government officials may see this as a problem-

## Lawyers offered shortcut

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Images of bespectacled attorneys wrestling with stacks of dusty, old law books are fading fast as the computer age dawns on the legal profession.

Now for every hour and a half spent gleaming through books for legal decisions and precedents, an attorney can cut research time down to 10 minutes with the recently installed Westlaw System II — a computer-assisted legal research system — at the Farmington Community Library.

"Once you get the knack of it, it certainly will save you time. There's no doubt about it," said Farmington Hills city attorney Paul Bibace, who is learning to use the computerized legal research system.

With the eight-week-old Westlaw system in the Farmington Hills library branch, attorneys who have taken the training course can quickly search the computer's memory for attorneys and judges' names, and legal decisions in cases involving federal law, securities, bankruptcy, Internal Revenue Service regulations and all Michigan cases, said library director Gordon Lewis.

"It (Westlaw) has a fairly extensive memory," said Jerry Furi, adult reference librarian, adding that an attorney has to think of synonyms, or similar descriptions of all the elements involved in the type of law cases requested from the computer. That means when requesting cases involving bad weather,

the attorney punches in the words, wet, snow, rainy, and so on.

"There's a certain amount of time you've got to invest in learning to use the system and to learn to think differently," said Jerry Furi, adult reference librarian, adding that an attorney has to think of synonyms, or similar descriptions of all the elements involved in the type of law cases requested from the computer. That means when requesting cases involving bad weather,

the attorney punches in the words, wet, snow, rainy, and so on.

TRADITIONALLY, an attorney sits down and sits through law books searching for any legal decisions pertaining to car accidents and bad weather, Lewis said. Now after plugging in associated elements of a situation, that search can be completed within minutes as the computer spits out the required information at 120 characters per second. If an attorney wants an actual copy of the information on the computer screen, the attached copier produces the information at 960 words per second, Lewis said.

"It's going to depend on how familiar you are with Westlaw," Bibace said, referring to the amount of time saved by the computer search. "It's a question of learning the system and staying familiar with the system."

But that's something that both Lewis and Furi admit can make or break an attorney's successful use of the computerized reference system.

"It doesn't take a particularly long time to be proficient," Lewis said, adding it should take an attorney about five hours to master the system and another 15 hours to adjust to a new way of searching for legal material.

While the Westlaw system provides

## Present quarters cramped, says chief

# Hills cops looking for more elbow room

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington Hills Police Department headquarters are cramped. But providing the department with roomier quarters for its 108 employees would cost an estimated \$2.5 million.

"It's like living in a goldfish bowl," said Police Chief John Nichols, who helped develop the city's state-required six-year capital improvement plan, designed as a planning tool for future city projects.

Included in the plan is a suggestion to spend approximately \$2.5 million to either expand the existing 7,550-square-foot department that's attached to Farmington Hills City Hall on 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road, or build a new building, said Thomas Blaisell, Director of Public Works.

"If the program (six-year improvement plan) is adopted, it would mean the police department would be built or expanded beginning in 1983," Blaisell said.

Although planning commissioners

presented the plan to city officials, it still needs approval by City Council members before any action can be taken.

City Council members in March hired Carl Luckenbach and Robert Ziegenfuss Inc., a Birmingham architectural firm, to evaluate the department's space needs and determine the quality of four city-suggested plans for providing extra space, including renovating an empty school building, building a new structure on the existing site or adding to the existing station.

THE PROPOSED improvement plan suggests providing police with 25,000 square feet of space. But that amount may not serve current needs, Nichols said. In a survey of newly built police stations between 1973 and 1976, the National Clearing House for Criminal Justice Planning and Architecture suggests offering 350 square feet per employee, or a total 38,000 to 40,000.

"This would accommodate the staffing level of the department for a period of up to 10 years in the future based on

projected population growth and commensurate growth of the department," the improvement plan indicates.

"Bear in mind, the whole issue is un-

der study by competent architects," Nichols said, indicating the department's desired square footage could change depending on statistics such as popula-

tion growth and transportation within the city.

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## ... as new firehouse eyed

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Farmington Hills planning commissioners have tentatively targeted the fire department for building expansion in the late 1980s although fire department space and building needs rank below the immediate need for larger quarters in the city police department.

"We've got an ongoing survey on statistics here we do any firming up of a particular plan," said Fire Chief Lawrence Karon.

In a recently released state-required six-year capital improvement plan, planning commissioners have sugges-

ed that as "the city continues to grow and both density and traffic congestion conditions increase," a fifth fire station might be needed that would be more centrally located than the city's existing four stations.

But Karon is quick to point out that consideration of a fifth station "is strictly in the planning process." A decision to build a fifth station depends on many factors, he said, including population, firefighter response time, population shifts and transportation.

If approved by City Council members, as part of the total capital improvement plan, a new fire station would be about 6,000 square feet in size

and in a central location such as near city hall on 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road. It would cost an estimated \$500,000, the improvement plan said.

"Right now, it's all based on preliminary data," Karon added.

But Karon said that the condition of station Number 3, built in 1948, on Wheeler and Independence, is probably more important than developing a fifth station. Planning commissioners have targeted proposed improvements in Station 3 also for the late 1980s.

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## Hopefuls square off in first debate

By Tom Boer  
staff writer

Susan C. Rennels, the assistant branch manager of an area bank, hopes she'll give a good account of herself between now and June 13, the date of the Farmington School Board election.

The 35-year-old Rennels, a community activist who has served with Community Cause and the League of Women Voters, is one of six candidates competing for one opening on the Farmington School Board.

Should she gather the most votes in the June 13 election, she'll serve a four-year term on the board.

Rennels, a divorced mother of two,

has lived on Tuck Road in Farmington Hills for the past 12 years. Her oldest child, a boy, is a graduate of Farmington High School, and her daughter is a ninth-grader at Farmington Harrison.

"I'm running because I'm committed to quality public education," Rennels said. "I feel Farmington has a good system now. It merits the working care necessary to maintain the quality."

Rennels has been interested in serving in government since her high school days at Royal Oak Dendro (Class of 1941).

"I've always been involved in government," she said. "I was in the student government in high school. After that, I was a volunteer for the League

## school race

of Women Voters."

Rennels married and started a family shortly after graduation but she never stopped working on a college degree.

"Over a 15 year period," she said, "I was a full-time volunteer, housewife, mother and an off-and-on student. It took me 15 years to graduate."

But graduate she did — with honors, from Wayne State University in 1977. She holds a bachelor of science degree with a major in political science.

SHE CONTINUED her volunteer work. As a founding member of the state chapter of Common Cause, a citizen-interest group, she helped draft the campaign finance law with which she's now complying.

"Through working in that organization, I learned quite a bit about the legislative process," she said. "I was a registered lobbyist for Common Cause."

Rennels said she sees two election issues — declining enrollment and the lack of quality in American education as detailed by the recent report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education.

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