

Farmington Observer

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Twenty-five cents

County wants to hold sewage behind school

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Question: What's as long as a football field, as wide as two football fields, 10-feet deep, sometimes filled with sewage and buried beneath the sod in back of a school in Farmington Hills?

Answer: What the Oakland County Drain Commission wants to put behind the O.D. Dunckel Middle School — a huge 200-foot long, 280-foot wide, 10-foot deep holding tank for excess sewer and rain water.

The commission is seeking approval of the Farmington school board to build such a concrete structure and sink it underground directly north of the school, which fronts on 12 Mile Road.

The tank was referred to as a reservoir during discussions at last Tuesday's school board meeting. County officials say it would reduce the flooding conditions in the nearby Kendallwood and Westbrook Manor subdivisions.

The board voted 6-0 to cooperate with the drain commission on the project "with details and specifics to be negotiated."

"It's a big septic tank to hold this sewage until it can be drained off," said Bill Prisk, Farmington's assistant superintendent for finances and services. He explained the plan to the board Tuesday.

"The only site large enough to accommodate such a reservoir is on our property," Prisk said. "They (the drain commission) are not asking anything at this time except that the board accept the concept. They've got a concept here. They're asking us if we think enough of it to let them put it on our property."

PRISK TOLD the board that the tank would cost \$5 to \$6 million to construct. Some 75 percent of the cost would be paid by the federal government, "but the rest would have to come from local sources," he said.

Construction would take between 18 months and two years, Prisk said, and there would be a "time of inconvenience" while it was being built.

Prisk emphasized that the tank would be dry under normal circumstances. It would be filled only when excess sewer and rain water were channeled in to relieve flooding conditions in the subdivisions.

Once the tank was underground, the area could be landscaped or six tennis courts could be constructed at county expense, Prisk said.

Said Board Trustee Emma Makinen during the discussion, "It sounds dangerous to me if it springs a leak."

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Soccer score

Ebon Nash (left) of Plymouth Salem High School sneaks a pass past Farmington High School's Randy Gallinger. The two teams battled to a 4-4 tie. For the story please turn to today's sports section.

RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Water rebate looms

The Michigan Court of Appeals has unanimously upheld the challenge of 77 suburban communities to water rates charged by the city of Detroit during 1976-81.

The state's second highest court thus reversed an earlier Circuit Court ruling that the return on investment exacted by those rates was "not unreasonable."

"This is a landmark decision for the suburban customers of the water system," said Edward H. McNamara, chairman of the Suburban Association of Detroit Water Customers, which in 1976 challenged a 39 percent water rate increase.

"This is the first time water customers ever won an action against the water department. You could say we have been successful."

"Detroit's liability to these communities under this ruling could be in excess of \$35 million," said McNamara, mayor of Livonia. "There is also a 12 percent per year interest on the total."

McNamara said the water department now had three options. It could appeal the court of appeals decision. It could let the case go back to circuit court and let the court decide the amount of damages. Or it could negotiate an amount to be returned to the suburban communities.

"I think they might negotiate because that liability keeps climbing at 12 percent," McNamara said.

THE CASE has been sent back to Circuit Court to determine the amount of the credit that should be granted to the suburban communities against their future water bills.

"I have not seen the ruling yet," said Earl Billing, director of the Farmington Public Services Department. "We should be getting a rebate if Detroit doesn't appeal."

Whether the rebate would be given to the city's customers, however, is up to the City Council, Billing said. Farmington customers now pay \$7.16 per quarter for the first 6,000 gallons per quarter. Customers pay 90 cents per 1,000 gallons over the first 6,000.

No date has been set for further trial court proceedings.

The appeals court ruled that Wexford County Circuit Judge William Peterson erred in accepting the rate formula set by Detroit. The case was shifted to the Wexford judge in a change of venue.

George E. Ward, attorney for the suburban communities, explained how Detroit was found to have overcharged suburban customers \$7.4 million a year and \$37.1 million over five years.

"The trial court was held to have misapplied the 'cost of capital' method in finding 'not unreasonable' Detroit's practice of making a charge for return on investment amounting to 9 percent of the value of all capital plant and equipment used in serving the suburbs," Ward said.

"ONLY 35 percent of the suburban-used plant is owned by Detroit free and clear. The remaining 65 percent is financed by existing mortgages bearing an average interest of only 4.5 percent."

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Variety spices student lunches



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Taking a break between classes is Cindy Sukockas (left) and Nadine Shaver, both eighth graders at Warner Middle School. Their selections of chicken soup, chocolate milk, chips and salad came from the a la carte line.

By Tom Baer
staff writer

The noise — a cacophony of adolescent voices speaking excitedly between mouthfuls of food — overpowers the adult ear. But lunchtime noise is part of the educational experience at Warner Middle School in Farmington Hills.

"You have to give the kids a chance to talk and to react to each other," said Bill Martin as he performed the assistant principal's task of overseeing the 200-plus sixth and seventh graders lunching one recent morning at Warner.

A hot lunch that morning ("Halfway through our day is about 10:30 a.m.," Martin explained) could have been hamburgers, hot dogs, fish, pizza, spaghetti, chili, mashed potatoes and a broccoli casserole.

FOR DESSERT, there was fresh fruit and four kinds of cookies baked earlier that morning by head cook Heather Remo, who has been feeding Farmington-area school children for 26 years.

"They're allowed one meat dish, one vegetable dish, one dessert and one milk," said Remo, who that morning baked 350 cookies and put together a casserole using 10 pounds of meat and five pounds of macaroni.

"It (the hot lunch program) has changed considerably over the years," Remo said. "We used to sell what we called a Type A meal. It was just a flat meal. But there was too much waste that way. Now the kids have a choice. They take what they like and usually they eat all they take."

ON A TYPICAL day, Remo and her crew feed around 550 students at Warner. The lunch program reaches about three quarters of the approximately 10,500 students in the Farmington district, according to Mike Howard, who is beginning his fourth year as the supervisor of food services for the district.

Lunches cost \$1 each in the elementary schools and \$1.30 in the middle and high schools. "We give larger portions in the middle and high schools," Howard explained.

Last year, the lunch program produced \$280,000, according to Howard, who called it "a break-even situation." The federal government subsidizes 15-16 percent of the hot lunch program.

NOT SUBSIDIZED, but still available to the students, is an a la carte section in the middle and high schools. Students can add to their sack lunches with fruit, milk and so-called junk food like Twinkies.

The district has also installed salad bars and soup tureens at the middle and high schools.

"We've done a lot of experimentation to see what the children really like and what they're eating," Howard said. "It's really the students' program, so we work with them to determine their choices."

"I work with the students and the student governments in the high schools and middle schools to see what their needs are and how close we can come to meeting them. I also communicate with students at lunch to see what they like."

SO WHAT'S A hot seller in the lunchrooms of the Farmington district? "No. 1, chicken nuggets, you betcha," Howard responded.

Other favorites are macaroni and cheese, fried chicken, hamburgers and pizza.

And what's being thrown away untouched or half eaten? "Hot dogs, surprisingly," Howard answered. "They used to be so popular, but they're hardly ever on the menu now."

Howard added, "What I've attempted to do in working with the students is to try a lot of things. We've tried a new meatball sandwich and it went over very well."

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oral quarrel

Should Bible keep male orientation?

The sometimes-controversial National Council of Churches has issued what it calls a "non-sexist" collection of Bible readings. In these readings, Jesus Christ is referred to as the "Child of God" rather than the son, and God is called both Father and Mother.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: SHOULD BIBLE READINGS KEEP THEIR TRADITIONAL MALE ORIENTATION?

To answer this question, call 477-5498. You have until 1 p.m. on Friday to respond. To see how your neighbors feel about this issue, please look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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Coming October 31

Cable group meets on installation fee

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Residents in Farmington Hills' less densely populated areas who were told they would have to pay a \$200-\$300 cable-TV installation fee are invited to discuss the problem with cable officials at a meeting of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Consortium (SWOCC) next week.

The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Farmington Hills' council chambers, said Lark Samouelian, SWOCC executive director. Samouelian has been working with Farmington Hills City Manager Law-

rence Savage and Tom Bjorklund, general manager of the MetroVision cable firm to find a way of easing the problem. MetroVision has a 15-year franchise with Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi.

The installation fee problem stems from MetroVision's "line extension policy" under which customers are charged for cable installation in areas which have fewer than 30 houses in a linear mile. After waiting months for cable TV, about 20 Power and 11 Mile residents attended a meeting Oct. 6 to oppose the installation fee.

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