



Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 38

Monday, February 20, 1984

Farmington, Michigan

28 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Police tell tale of cramped work space

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Evidence and stolen property lay packed to the ceiling in the basement of Farmington Hills Police headquarters.

Pistols, six-packs, license plates, televisions, a home computer and other items take up space between file cabinets and boxes of records.

"Where the hell am I supposed to put this stuff?" officer Ed Wozniak asked as he stood between boxes. "There is no way to separate the guns from the (license) plates and the beer."

"For me to get up into the corner is a problem," Wozniak said. "As you can see, we no longer have control over it."

The department's property room is an example of the cramped police quarters that Farmington Hills City Council has discussed since the middle of the last year.

Although the demand for room has been growing in the last five years, "it's been critical in the last three years. We can no longer operate," said Lt. Gerald Miller, who, with Chief John Nichols, has been instrumental in pushing plans for a new department.

AT 7:30 TONIGHT the council again will discuss plans for a new \$2.5 million police building.

City officials are requesting the council to authorize architects Luckenbach & Ziegelman Inc. of Birmingham to move into the design development phase of the architectural study.

Architects have estimated costs at \$78.13 a square foot for the proposed 32,000-square-foot building. Present police headquarters measure 7,500 square feet.

"This is the farthest we've gotten down the track," said Chief John Nichols, referring to the 1½ years the move for a larger police facility has been under way.

The city's growth in population and corresponding growth in police personnel, records, equipment and files have pushed the 100-person department literally to the walls, Nichols said.

Officials have been closing off hallways to make room for files and records. Certain entryways can be used only when people aren't in the way working.

Outside carports are being used to store property, and offices and work spaces have been etched out of cubbyholes.

To provide the department's subpoena clerk with room to work, police officials converted a men's one-toilet bathroom into a small office.

"The bathroom backed up so badly we couldn't use it," Miller said.

"WE FEEL WE have been as good managers as we can, both with the building and personnel," Nichols said. But council members are wrestling

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— Ed Wozniak
police officer

with how to pay for an estimated \$2.5 million building when also faced with other capital improvements listed in the millions of dollars.

"We have been reasonable in our requests," Nichols said.

Because a police facility is more complex than most office buildings, the cost of the proposed facility may seem high, Nichols said. Yet the architects' estimated cost is approximately \$5 a square foot less than the national average for police departments, Nichols said.

He said Canton Township's police building under construction will cost more than \$82 a square foot.

Architectural plans so far show a triangular-shaped, two-story police facility with rooms built for specific functions such as records and dispatch, a firing range, male and female bathrooms and storage space.

THE PRESENT department's dispatch center may be the best example of cramped, stuffy quarters. Seated before a wall-length console, three dispatchers work elbow-to-elbow.

"We don't ever shut the door," said a dispatcher.

On each shift the dispatchers take turns sitting at a set of controls next to a back wall where getting in and out is a major physical task.

The communications quarters are also plagued with noise problems from a computer located less than four feet from the dispatchers.

The two holding cells, sometimes filled with as many as eight prisoners each, offer their own unique amount of noise that at times is so disruptive dispatchers cannot hear information for an emergency call.

"We could never get 911 in here," dispatch supervisor Charles VanRiper said about the emergency call system.

"We would need an expanded console." When the Farmington Hills police took over dispatching services for Franklin Village police, a major problem was where to put that extra telephone.

The dispatchers found a place. Now it is sitting on its side, the only way they could put the phone within reach of the three dispatchers on duty.

More room is needed for files and to operate the dispatch center more efficiently.

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Ed Wozniak stands in the middle of the Farmington Hills Police Department storage room, which over the years has become cramped and disorganized because of limited space.

RANDY BORSI/staff photographer

Home loan fix-it program boosted

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills officials have increased the maximum income levels needed for eligibility in the city's housing rehabilitation loan program.

The income levels in each of eight categories, which are based on the number of people in a household, increased by about \$2,000 over last year, said Cheryl Carter, housing rehabilitation specialist.

The low-interest loans to help low-to-moderate income families improve and rehabilitate their homes are made at a 3 percent interest rate

with the city expecting repayment within 15 years, she said.

"We don't go in and repair furniture or replace appliances," Carter said. "It's for the health, safety and welfare of the people."

Some of the repairs that have been done in the first two years of the program, Carter said, include roof work, insulation, additions to ease overcrowding, and water repairs.

WHATEVER TYPE of work is done, the loans must be used for needed repairs to make the house safe and to provide adequate shelter. To be eligible for the low-interest

or deferred loans and grants, owners must be occupying the house and have income, for example, of up to \$17,250 for a one-person household and \$19,750 for a two-person household, Carter said. The income levels range up to \$30,800 for an eight-person household, she added.

Since June 1983, approximately \$96,000 in low-interest and deferred loans, as well as grants have been awarded to low-to-moderate income Farmington Hills residents for house repairs, Carter said.

Last week, City Council members agreed to allocate \$114,000 of the city's anticipated \$360,000 in 1984-85

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money to the Housing Assistance Plan, now in its third year. Of the total \$225,000 allocated toward the housing program in its first two years, approximately \$195,000 has been spent, providing repairs for 45 households in Farmington Hills.

In addition to the housing rehabilitation program, city officials last year established a Senior Citizen Residential Security Improvement Program offering low-income elderly residents dead bolt locks and eye viewers on their exterior doors, free of charge.

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Convention growth must for economy

By Tom Baer
staff writer

William McLaughlin, whose business is boosterism, last Thursday advised about 40 suburban merchants to "become rooters for the city of Detroit."

Why? "Because we need one another," said the grandfatherly, white-haired McLaughlin.

Speaking before a Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Com-

merce luncheon, McLaughlin, president of the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau, stressed the business interdependence which he feels exists between Detroit — or at least its downtown — and the suburbs which surround it.

"I believe that if Eight Mile Road (which separates Detroit and its northern suburbs) is a barrier between the city and suburbs, then we can't survive as a community."

Committee to study convention strategy

A group of business and civic leaders is uniting in hopes of increasing the amount of the convention and tourist money for southwestern Oakland County.

Calling itself the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Assets, Promotion and Development, the group has met once and is planning future sessions to develop a strategy for attracting visitors to the area.

"We don't want to lose our momentum or go on forever and forever," said Angel Bakos, a public relations executive who spearheaded the organization's move.

"We want to find out all the information we can about the cities, institutions, businesses and the history of the

area and let people who are coming to the area know about us," she said.

One of the reasons for organizing, she said, was to attract attention to the area, which many times takes second place to other areas of Oakland County such as Southfield.

A second meeting is planned for later this month at Bofford Inn.

Among the goals the group has set for itself is to:

- Gather information on centers of interest, research resources and consider common links.
- Develop a marketing plan for southwestern Oakland County.
- Develop a strategy for obtaining funds for implementation of the plan.
- To implement a marketing plan.

"The city can't survive without the suburban hotels," said McLaughlin, whose organization was instrumental in bringing the 1980 Republican National Convention to downtown Detroit. "At the same time, the suburban hotels can't survive without the central city convention facilities."

McLaughlin pointed out that metropolitan Detroit does a lively convention business for a snowbelt city with about 600 gatherings a year. Last year, 830,000 visitors, many of them conventioners, spent \$135 million in the tri-county area, he said.

Following the 1980 convention, during which Ronald Reagan was picked to be the Republican standard bearer, "20,000 people went home singing Detroit's praises," according to McLaughlin.

BUT THE OLD town has problems aplenty, McLaughlin, a Northville resident, said.

For one thing, Cobo Hall, which he called the Star Wars of convention centers when it opened in the early 1980s, needs to be expanded (one scheme would extend the building over the Detroit River) beyond its present 600,000 square feet, which ranks 16th in size nationally.

"When you get one convention in town, you can't have another," McLaughlin complained.

More hotels are needed in downtown Detroit, he added. There are only three sizable ones there now. Detroit conven-



RANDY BORSI/staff photographer

William McLaughlin passes on words of hope to the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce about the tourist and convention business in metropolitan Detroit.

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