

# Farmington Observer

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Twenty-five cents

## Council elects mayor pro tem

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Farmington Hills Councilman Joe Alkateeb is the city council's new mayor pro tem, despite a move by Councilman Donn Wolf to postpone the election.

"I believe Mr. Alkateeb is the logical and wise choice for this position," said Councilman Ben Marks, in nominating Alkateeb for the position.

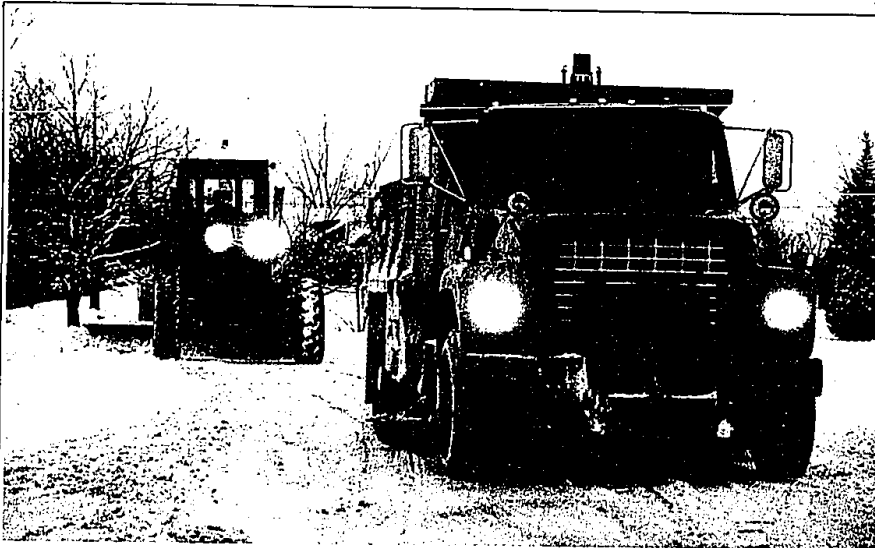
Although council in December elected then mayor pro tem Jan Dolan as mayor, the election of a new mayor pro tem was postponed until after a recount of ballots cast in the special election between Marks and Terry Sever. Marks was later declared the winner by one vote.

BUT THE issue of the recount which Sever has taken to Oakland County Circuit Court was offered by Wolf as one

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RANDY BOSTWICK/staff photographer Mayor pro tem Joe Alkateeb



RANDY BOSTWICK/staff photographer

Heavy-duty snow vehicles were out in force on subdivision streets last Thursday to handle Farmington Hills' first-over snow emergency. Parking was banned on city streets to make way for the salt trucks and plows.

## Hills puts the bite on winter

By Tom Beer staff writer

Farmington Hills flexed its municipal muscles last Thursday by declaring a "snow emergency" — the first ever in the 11-year history of the city — and banning parking on most city streets until the live-inch dumping could be cleared.

"It wasn't absolutely necessary at that point to declare an emergency," admitted Dan Rooney, assistant to Director of Public Services Tom Bissell, who made the decision, "but we just wanted to test the system."

The "system" involves getting the no-parking message announced over the largest radio and television stations, including cable, and then sending in the Department of Public Works (DPW) crews to clear the neighborhood and subdivision streets. "We called the radio and TV stations and so forth, and then turned on

the radios to listen for the announcements," Rooney said.

"I think down the line if we get five inches, we might not call a snow emergency," he added. "But we wanted to make sure we have this thing fully operational in case we get a 15- or 20-inch snow."

Hills officials used a two-year-old ordinance, which allows the emergency powers to be invoked.

"It basically gives the city the authority to declare a snow emergency in conjunction with the parking ban," Rooney said, "in order to get the cars off the roads so that we can as quickly and safely as possible plow all the streets."

"We go into the local subdivisions when we get a five- or six-inch accumulation. In that we had five inches and a forecast for more, we told our DPW crews to go on extended hours and plow all streets."

"If we were to plow around parked

*'I think down the line if we get five inches, we might not call a snow emergency.'*

— Dan Rooney  
Department of Public Services

THE PARKING ban is automatically lifted with no announcement after the street has been plowed, Rooney said.

The city is responsible for clearing snow from most residential and several major roadways. Oakland County handles plowing and salting of Eight Mile, 10 Mile, 12 Mile, Middlebelt, Orchard Lake and Farmington roads,

Northwestern Highway, M-102 and the majority of Grand River.

To get the message out, city officials first call an organization called Michigan Emergency Patrol, which notifies 10 or 12 of the larger radio stations in metropolitan Detroit.

"Then we individually call the commercial TV stations and get in touch with MetroVision for the cable," Rooney said. "And I believe there's also a networking through the Emergency Broadcast System."

During the emergency, the DPW's ranks, which contain about 30 people normally, swell with employees from other city departments who are called on to help with the plowing.

"We put as many people behind snowplows as possible," Rooney said. "People from engineering and parks and recreation will take their four-wheel drives into the cul de sacs where you need a small machine to maneuver."

## Flood plain complex ratified

By Joanne Maliszewski staff writer

Despite a lot of questions and concerns, Farmington Hills officials gave developers a green light to proceed with plans for an apartment complex in a flood-hazard area on Orchard Lake Road.

Council's 6-0 vote last week provided developers Brooks & Layne with only a preliminary approval of a site plan for the proposed Orchard Place Apartments. The approval included a stipulation that the developers insure the city against liability due to flooding.

The flood zone consists of about 80 percent of the site," said David Call, city engineer. That much of the 17.5-acre parcel would be under water if a 100-year storm hit the area, Call added.

Flooding could reach four to five feet deep in some areas of the site on Orchard Lake Road, south of the K-mart Shopping Center, if a 100-year storm hit, Call added.

DEVELOPERS' preliminary plans call for putting the apartment units on stilts that would safely keep living quarters 8-10 feet above the ground, Call said. Parking would be provided under the apartment buildings. Tennis courts and a swimming pool are also planned.

Although the apartments would be clear of flooding if a 100-year storm were to hit, the parking area under the buildings would flood, Call said.

As required by law, Brooks & Layne have received a permit from the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to build in the flood plain. It was issued because the elevation of the first floor of the apartment buildings is above the floodplain, Call said.

DNR approval, however, did little to alleviate some council members' concerns.

TALK TURNED to the legal battles which resulted from the 1981 storm in which the Red Roof Inn and Bob Sellers Pontiac and other businesses were flooded.

"Once bitten, twice shy," said Councilwoman Jodi Soronen. "This makes me very nervous even though we're talking about parking lots. I'm just not comfortable with this."

Developer Sandy Layne called the 17.5 acres "an ideal site" for apartments.

"If we were worried about it (flooding), we wouldn't build on it," Layne said. "If you don't allow this to be built here, what can be built here?"

Although considered a floodplain, the area targeted for the apartment complex didn't flood during the 1981 storm, Call said.

In addition, the city does not have any ordinances or regulations that prohibit a certain amount of standing water in a parking lot, Call said.

"The city often times approves sites where the designed retention areas are parking lots and in many cases, those areas are subject to the ponding of water which may be 1 1/2 to 2 feet deep," Call said in a report to council.

Because the city does not set guidelines for an allowable depth of water in a parking lot, Call said, the decision on whether the site should be approved must be "based upon the probability of the flooding occurring."

If the area does flood, he said, the big question is whether the ponding of water would have a serious effect on the "life, safety and welfare" of residents.

BUT CALL told council the only way the flooding could become life threatening is if it were combined "with some freak coincidence," such as an emergency vehicle being unable to reach the apartments.

"We have to look at the entire possible scope of problems, not just the life threatening," said Councilman Donn Wolf.

A life-threatening situation is only "the peak of the issue," Wolf said. He added that property damage, similar to what occurred at the Red Roof Inn in 1981, must also be considered.

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## IRS: We can't pay 'em if we can't find 'em

By Tom Beer staff writer

Craig K. Amboyen, where are you? Has anybody seen Harriet Clum? Will Marcel B. Gurwicz please reveal her whereabouts.

Craig, Harriet and Marcel are on a list of Farmington-area residents wanted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), that infamous tax-gathering organization.

But Craig, Harriet, Marcel and the

rest needn't fret. In their cases, the IRS is out to give, not take.

They're all due refunds from their 1983 encounters with the IRS — but the IRS claims it can't find them.

Charles A. Parks, IRS District Director for Michigan, said that 1,479 refund checks worth more than \$873,000 were returned by the postal service as undeliverable in the state.

The checks range in amounts from \$1 to \$19,227, and average \$455, Parks said. IRS personnel believe most of these taxpayers moved or changed

their last names, and failed to notify the postal service or IRS.

"It's hard to say why they can't be found," said Walt Dumnigan, public affairs officer at the IRS District Office in Detroit. "Some of these that come back, we know there's been a change of address. But with others, there hasn't been."

And so the IRS plays detective so that taxpayer and refund check may be united.

"Our normal procedure is to first send out the refund check, and then to send out a second notice," Dumnigan said. "After the second notice comes back, we consider it undeliverable." And then?

"Well, then what we do is go to the news media and ask them to get the message out," Dumnigan said. "We find a significant number of them that way."

THE IRS HAS "about a dozen different ways" to track down the ones it still can't find, Dumnigan said.

"We have a whole series of steps we go through," he added. "First, we'll use local telephone directories and try and run them down that way. After that ... we'll check with former employers, we'll use the state licensing bureau, we'll even check with local neighbors in the prior address area."

The IRS doesn't list all that costly or time consuming, according to Dumnigan.

"What we try to do is, whenever there's down time, fit that kind of project in," he said. "It certainly isn't that we're stopping work to do this." Sometimes the IRS is stumped by the illegible scrawl which is the name and

*'We go to the news media and ask them to get the message out. We find a significant number of them that way.'*

Walt Dumnigan IRS spokesman

address on the tax form, Dumnigan said.

"Of course, we do the best we can, but sometimes it comes out wrong," he said.

Others on the Farmington-area refund list include Katherine K. Kelly, Brian P. O'Connor, Robert D. Pierson, Laura L. Romeo and Arthur P. Quinn.

Mary R. Docker and Joanne M. Horigan, both of West Bloomfield Township, also are on the missing-taxpayer list.

If you are due a refund from your 1983 federal tax return and have not yet received it, contact the IRS at 1-800-424-1040.

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