

# Farmington Observer

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## New stamps and holiday snarl post

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

It's probably the first time in a long time people have rushed to the mail box to pay their bills long before the due date.

Faced with a two-cent postage increase when the clock struck 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, even those faithful wait-to-the-last-minute bill payers knew a sacrifice had to be made.

Those who neglected to buy new 22-cent stamps or extra two-cent stamps to add to the collection of unused 20-cent stamps probably were also surprised to find the post office doors closed Monday, Feb. 18, for George Washington's birthday.

The result Tuesday morning was a mad rush to the post office to face lines of customers who figured they'd get there early and beat the traffic jam leading to post offices on 12 Mile Road in Farmington Hills and Slocum in Farmington.

"Oh, what's happening?" gasped a woman as she pulled open the Farmington Post Office door and saw a line of customers reaching around the post office boxes.

Looking dejected after being told the reason for the lines, the woman wasted

little time in realizing that if she didn't run to catch her place in line, she'd be waiting even longer.

It was no surprise to local postal employees. They had been warned. They were prepared to face the onslaught of customers when the post offices reopened after the holiday.

"We forewarned everyone last week to get a good night's sleep ready for Tuesday," said Ken Harris, Farmington Hills postmaster.

"Today is probably the heaviest day we've had in this office," Harris said Tuesday, several hours after the post office on 12 Mile Road opened its doors. "Christmas is a breeze compared to this."

MAIL CARRIERS started at 5 a.m. instead of the usual 6:30 a.m. starting time. Mail trucks in the post office lots were double-parked to allow for the expected crush of customer cars. Staff was added to process the mail and man additional windows. Workers' lunch periods were cut from the usual one hour to half that.

"We have as many people (employees) in today as possible," Harris said. "We knew this was going to happen."

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Customers had a rate increase and a long wait in line to face Tuesday when the Farmington and Farmington Hills post offices reopened following the George Washington holiday.

## Secret meet draws blank for council

By Julie Brown  
staff writer

No decision was reached early Wednesday morning on the fate of Farmington Hills' legal adviser.

"We did not come to a decision," Mayor Jan Dolan said Wednesday. "It'll be back on the agenda."

Council members met in a closed session early Wednesday morning to discuss the city's current legal representation. Paul Bibeau of Brennan, Bibeau and Pochman represents the city.

"I think, due to the severity of this thing, I want to move for an executive session," council member Ben Marks told the council before the 4-1 vote to close the session. Council members went into the closed session shortly before 2 a.m. Wednesday.

"The basis for the executive session is to discuss employment," council member Joan Dudley said before voting on the closed session. "The reason we are allowed to have this executive session is that the firm has requested it. We are considering termination," and the firm has requested the closed session, she said.

COUNCIL MEMBER Donn Wolf voted against having the closed session; members JoAnn Soronen and Charles Williams were absent.

Soronen was out of town at a conference. Williams was at the meeting ear-

lier in the evening, but left before the council reached the agenda item.

Council members decided to delay their decision, Dolan said, because only five members were at the closed session.

"We felt it was a decision that all seven council members should be involved in."

The item will most likely appear on the agenda again for the March 18 meeting, she said. There is no council meeting scheduled for March 4, and Charles Williams will be unable to attend the March 11 meeting.

Bibeau's law firm has represented the city for more than 17 years.

Paul Bibeau's firm was one of five with municipal experience that made presentations to the council Feb. 12. The others were: Cummings, McCloy, Davis and Aho; Kemp, Klein, Endleman and Beer; Kohl, Secret, Wardle, Lynch, Clark and Hampton; and Patterson, Patterson, Whitefield, Manikoff, Terman and White.

The Feb. 12 presentations came as the result of an earlier council decision to review one of the city's consulting firms each year. The city attorney was chosen as the first for review.

MICHIGAN'S OPEN Meetings Act allows closed sessions for discussion of personnel matters.

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## Council launches study to update downtown

By Steve Barnaby  
editor

For the first time in a decade, city of Farmington officials will examine the future of the downtown area.

At 7 p.m. Monday, March 18, council will meet with planning commissioners, planning consultants and the Economic Development Corp. to develop a strategy for continued growth in the central business district.

The Grand River and Farmington Road shopping area has met with increased competition over the last decade with the construction of several new shopping areas — Twelve Oaks in Novi, Hunter's Square on Orchard Lake and 14 Mile, as well as several other smaller shopping malls in the area.

"This effort should provide a program which will aid owners, merchants and the community to maintain a viable central business district into the 1990s," Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman told council members at Monday's legislative session.

"Planning for the central business district should be an ongoing process which allows the local government and the business community alike to adjust in response to changing trends," he said.

The city's last effort at updating the downtown area was in 1975 when the area's mercantile future looked bleak. At that time the 70,000-square-foot Federal's building was about to close and another 30,000 square feet of store space stood empty downtown.

Another big blow to downtown in the '70s was when the district's biggest

mercantile drawing card, the Scott Colburn Saddlery, moved to Livonia.

Deadman urged council to take action before a repeat of the last decade recurred.

"I'm suggesting we look at the area before it gets sick," he said.

The 1975 study proved fruitful, said Deadman. Since that study, additional soft goods, service and retail stores have been added to the downtown area. The former Federal's building was redesigned and now contains several state and national merchandising chains such as Pier One, Radio Shack and T.J. Maxx.

"This was accomplished by the reuse of existing buildings, major renovations of older buildings which were vacant at the time and a cooperative effort of many building owners to upgrade their buildings," said Deadman.

The study comes on the heels of the announcement last year that the Farmer Jack's supermarket is leaving its Farmington Road and State Street location for a new center on Nine Mile and Farmington Road.

Although the fate of that building is still undetermined, inquiries have been made by Arbor Drugs, a local chain whose headquarters are based in Dearborn.

INSUFFICIENT PARKING also has been a continuing problem for the downtown area. With too few parking spaces and a lack of revenue to build parking structures in the downtown area, the city must be content with dealing with the problem piecemeal.



This parcel of property north of the downtown shopping area is being eyed for use as a parking lot.

Deadman told council.

"The parking problem goes beyond our capacity to meet the need," he said. Although parking will be part of the upcoming study, council did take action this week to alleviate the congestion along the Thomas Street parking lot, north of the stores lining Grand River, between Farmington Road and Warner.

Council has agreed to attempt the purchase of a parcel of land which will

allow for 20 to 22 more parking spaces. The plot of land is located approximately mid-block, north of the Village Outlet and west of small industrial factory.

"We would propose that the city purchase this parcel and develop it as a parking lot for use by the general public. Funds for the project would be provided through the federal community development block grant program," Deadman told council.

## Weather wilts love bouquets

By Julie Brown  
staff writer

The heavy snowfall last week made life difficult for many Detroit-area residents. One group, however, faced a particularly difficult challenge — getting Valentine's Day flowers delivered on time.

Florists depend heavily on Valentine's Day sales, and last week's wintery weather didn't help them much.

"That's probably the biggest holiday there is," said Barbara Pulice, manager of Almay's Florist and Gift Shop at 31164 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills. "Valentine's Day is bigger than Mother's Day even."

The delivery service that Almay's uses had difficulties of its own, she said.

"They said they were short-handed and the trucks couldn't move, because the streets weren't plowed. I had to hire extra people, friends, to deliver them. Thank God for friends."

Despite the troubles, Almay's was able to make all of its Valentine's Day deliveries by approximately 9:15

p.m. on Thursday, Pulice said. Some of the orders for the Wednesday before the holiday didn't arrive until Friday.

"We made sure everything got there. We got them out there by hook or by crook," she said.

"It's over, and thank goodness. There'll be another one next year."

"IT JUST made it harder for deliveries," said Fran Lesperance, owner of Farmington Center Florist and Gifts at 33169 Grand River in Farmington. "It was just hard delivering that's all."

Farmington Center Florist and Gifts stopped taking orders around 6 p.m. the day before Valentine's Day.

"We cut them off because we had too many," Lesperance said. "I don't take orders if I can't meet them."

"The weather was kind of hard. Customers still came in, though," she added. "People were very nice about it, they were understanding."

"We did anticipate problems with it (the weather)," said David Schroeter,

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### oral quarrel

## Give us your ideas on downtown fix up

At this week's Farmington city council session, the city's legislators decided to meet with planners to discuss the development of the downtown shopping area.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is: What ideas do you have to fix up the

downtown Farmington area around the Grand River/Farmington Road intersection?

You can answer this question by calling 477-5498 until 1 p.m. on Friday. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer to see how your neighbors feel about this issue.

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