

2 store partners charged with buying stolen goods

By Joanne Mallazewski staff writer

Two family members — partners in a Farmington Hills party store — face felony and high misdemeanor charges following an undercover police investigation into the sale of stolen property from the store.

Butros Hanna Jaghab, 45, and Jabara Mousa Ghannam, 35, both of Livonia and partners in BJ's party store, 28734 Grand River, were arrested May 31, after an undercover Farmington Hills police officer sold about \$100 worth of items on four separate occasions at the store.

The property was reported as stolen. Farmington Hills police Chief William Dwyer said.

Jaghab and Ghannam, who are brothers-in-law, stood mute to one felony count each of conspiracy to buy, buying, receiving, possessing or concealing stolen property in excess of \$100. They also stood mute at their June 28 arraignment to one count each of solicitation of retail fraud, first-degree. Not-guilty pleas were entered on their behalf on each count.

The conspiracy charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and \$10,000 fine. The retail fraud charge, a high misdemeanor, carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison and \$500 fine.

BOTH MEN are free on \$10,000, or 10 percent, cash surety bond set

The undercover investigation began in May with a confidential tip that the store allegedly buys stolen or shoplifted items, which are redistributed and resold, police chief William Dwyer said.

by 47th District Judge Margaret Schaeffer at their arraignment. Preliminary examination on the charges is scheduled for 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 7, in the 47th District Court.

Ghannam's attorney, Neil Fink of Detroit, and Jaghab's attorney, Mark Kriger of Detroit, did not respond to the Observers' inquiries.

The undercover investigation began in May with a confidential tip that the store allegedly buys stolen or shoplifted items, which are redistributed and resold, Dwyer said.

Police used their city council-budgeted investigation money to buy items that the undercover officer took to the store for sale as stolen items, Dwyer said.

Following the four separate purchases from the undercover officer, police executed a search warrant on the store "to allow the recording of

sales transactions to substantiate the evidence that the defendants were aware they were purchasing stolen property," Dwyer said.

The police chief said officers also found evidence of stolen property valued in the thousands of dollars from other businesses.

Police also conducted an administrative search under rules of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission, from which the men have a liquor license for the party store.

Jaghab, according to police records, bought the liquor license in 1976. Ghannam became a partner in the business in 1982.

THE STORE has a history of four violations of selling alcohol to minors since 1978, according to police records. Tickets also were issued for selling to minors in June 1984, October 1986 and June 1987. The licensee was fined by the liquor control commission, according to Dwyer.

"If they (Jaghab and Ghannam) are convicted on a felony obviously they'll have to sell the store. You can't own a licensed establishment if you're convicted of a felony," Dwyer said.

Woman asks spray ban

Continued from Page 1

gree with Emmert. Judy Donner of Orkin Lawn Care, for example, said employees are well-trained in the use of the chemicals and their application.

Consider, Donner said, that of all the chemicals, fertilizers and herbicides used in the country, 15 percent are used by lawn companies and 85 percent are sold over-the-counter to homeowners.

"My question is, if there are people who see lawn care trucks and claim to be so sensitive, are those people also sensitive to their neighbors when they're doing it (applying chemicals) themselves?" Donner said. "People assume if you can buy it over the counter, it's safe. But they are chemicals."

The state House of Representatives recently passed HB4489 that requires companies to provide neighbors with verbal or written warning when a yard will be sprayed. It requires that homeowners be given a list of chemical ingredients and warnings and that warning signs are put on lawns after spraying.

There is more for residential areas. Basically it's to let people know your neighbor is having the lawn sprayed," state Rep. Jan Dolan of Farmington Hills said.

THE BILL AWAITS discussion in the state Senate's agriculture and forestry committee.

Emmert said she believes there's little or no need for chemicals. "Let Mother Nature take its course," she

said. "I have hardly any problems with insects or fungus."

Emmert says many species of trees and plants are now developed to be disease resistant. As far as fertilizers go, she has been using organic Ringers — a fairly new product — on her lawn and she uses horse manure in her gardens.

But Donner of Orkin says people assume if something is man-made, it must be bad. If it's natural, it must be good. "The dose is the poison," she said. "Anyway, a lot of insecticides are naturally based."

A spokesman for Amerigro Lawn Spraying in Farmington Hills said the key is the amount and frequency of application. "Obviously there's good and bad to it. But it's basically safe."

Rennels top election spender

By Casey Hane staff writer

Susan Rennels, who won her third term on the Farmington Hills school board in June, topped the list in money spent and received during the election.

In what was a highly competitive race for one 4-year term, Rennels took in more than \$3,000 in contributions and spent about \$2,900. She was followed by Laura Myers, who received and spent about \$1,610 and Richard DeVries, who spent \$715 and took no outside contributions, according to post-election campaign statements filed between July 5-9 with Oakland County.

Rennels, 47, is a banking executive with First Federal of Michigan in Farmington Hills branch. She garnered 54 percent of the vote in the June 10 election.

SHE HAD strong support in a number of areas, including support from local Michigan Education Association affiliate unions; fellow

Susan Rennels, 47, is a banking executive with First Federal of Michigan's Farmington Hills branch. She garnered 54 percent of the vote in the June 10 election.

board members Cathleen Webb, Helen Ditzhay, Jack Cotton, James Abernethy and Helen Prulow; and a number of parents who are active in the Friends of Farmington Schools group, although no direct donations were noted from that group.

Other known contributors included members of the Farmington Democratic Club — including Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, District Judge Margaret Schaeffer and retired superintendent Lewis Schulman.

Her largest contributions came from the local unions' Farmington

Coordinating Council PAC, which offered \$300 and former school trustee and attorney Michael Splice who gave \$344. Rennels put \$600 of her own money toward the election effort.

IN PAST ELECTIONS, Rennels filed waivers with the elections commission, showing she intended to spend less than the amount required to file campaign spending statements.

For the past six years, that limit has been up to \$1,000; previously it was up to \$500.

Rennels' campaign kicked into high gear in its final weeks. If spending reports are an indicator, as of late May, Myers had led campaign spending at about \$1,600, with Rennels having spent only \$1,000. Rennels spent heavily on postage and printing, while both Myers and DeVries showed the bulk of their expense in yard signs.

Hills wraps up deal to acquire MDOT site

By Joanne Mallazewski staff writer

The more than 45-acre Michigan Department of Transportation property south of 6000 now belongs to the city of Farmington Hills.

Final purchase was delayed because the state Department of Natural Resources, which approved a grant for the land's purchase, wouldn't accept the \$810,000 appraisal on the land conducted by MDOT.

But the DNR officials finally compromised. "The DNR said, 'Fine, the city can make up the difference,'" said Dan Potter, Farmington Hills special services director.

The \$810,000 price tag on the parkland will be paid with grant money and money from the city's special parks and recreation millage fund, Potter said.

The 75 percent matching grant from the DNR will provide \$547,500 toward the purchase. The

city will pay the remaining \$262,500.

NOW THAT the city owns the land, MDOT officials have asked that everyone stop calling the property the "MDOT property," city manager William Costick said in June.

That property and the adjacent city-owned Peltz property will be used as city parkland. But the acreage has been controversial for many residents who want the land maintained in its natural state.

The new special parks and recreation millage plan calls for only developing an entrance road, parking, natural areas and a small picnic area in the next eight years.

An ad hoc committee has also been named and charged with developing plans for the hilly and wooded acreage. The city council also reserved a portion of the Peltz property for a new, larger library if voters approve construction and financing in the future.

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