

# Hills passes gavel, salutes outstanding employees

By Bill Coutant  
Staff Writer

The Farmington Hills City Council started the year off on an up note, passing the gavel from former Mayor Jon Grant to new Mayor Nancy Bates and publicly honoring outstanding employees.

"This is an emotional experience," said Bates, who is an aide to State Rep. Jen Dolan. Bates takes over for Grant, who she praised as a mayor who performed "with a touch of class." For his part, Grant thanked the council and praised the city's staff.

Bates said improving flood protection, the city's parks, expanding sewer facilities, improving roads, addressing fire and department of public works

needs, and expanding court facilities were on her busy agenda.

"Be on the alert," she said. "There are going to be a lot of Saturday meetings and study sessions." Adding to the festive atmosphere Monday night was the awards ceremony for the city's employees.

Yvonne A. Singer, who works in the special services department's senior adult division, became the first part-time employee named employee of the year. City Manager Bill Costick praised her efforts as a transportation coordinator and her problem solving abilities. She has worked with the city for 17 years.

Singer, who takes pride in her nickname, "bag lady," credited her fellow workers in a varied program for seniors.

"We are dedicated," she said. "We have a lot of fun."

Officer John Markey, who joined the Farmington Hills Police force in 1984, was named police officer of the year.

Police Chief William Dwyer credited Markey with a high degree of professionalism, a career that includes more than 1,700 arrests, six department citations, eight unit citations and other honors for his work in a variety of law enforcement areas.

Fire Chief Richard Marinucci presented Ron Sill with the award for firefighter of the year. Sill, who teaches at Mercy High School, was credited with saving two lives over the past year.

Six employees also received awards for outstanding service. They are Jean Coll of the fire department, Daren Collins of the public works division, James Cubera of the engineering division, Mario Donigan of the planning division, Jacquelyn Lindberg of the police department and Pamela Winneur of the city clerk department.

The city also honored 62 other employees for their years of continuous service.

## City backs school millage

The Farmington Hills City Council went one step further on backing the schools' upcoming tax vote on Feb. 2.

The council not only voted to reauthorize the Farmington School District's three millage requests into one, but council members unanimously voted their support of the millage, something Farmington City Council members did not quite do.

"I was hoping that the resolution would include our endorsement of the millages," said Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi.

No one argued. On the contrary, the other members agreed and voted their support for the proposal that would be worth \$31.1 million for the school district's operating budget.

"I think it's a prudent proposal," said newly elected Mayor Nancy Bates.

Several groups, including the chamber of commerce, have for the first time given a school tax plan support.

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set up Farmington Hills for paying higher prices to bidders if they were local and discourage a wide range of companies from doing business with the city, but could backfire if other cities closed out Farmington Hills businesses, said Councilman Ben Marks.

"Our integrity is more important than the money," Marks said. "We have a bidding process and we should adhere to it."

City Attorney John Donohue said the council could legally reverse itself and not award the contract to the lowest bidder.

Councilman Jon Grant agreed with Sever and his concern for the city's business.

"This money is coming out of forfeiture funds," Grant said. "It's not taxpayers' money."

Mayor Nancy Bates had the final, decisive vote, siding with Vagnozzi, Marks and Councilwoman Joanne Smith in voting to

honor the lowest bid. Mayor pro tem Larry Lichtman voted with Sever and Grant to make it a 4-3 decision.

"I think we're bound by the process we've set up," she said.

### Bike path coming

City Manager Bill Costick announced some good news for walkers, joggers and bicyclists.

A matching grant of \$338,000 for a 1 1/2 mile sidewalk that will span from Heritage Park to Pioneer Park and cross I-696 has been awarded to the city.

The city will match the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant with about \$35,000, said Steve Brock, assistant to Costick.

"We've budgeted \$100,000 for it," said Brock, who wrote the grant application. "There were 109 grants awarded and 197 applications. We were very fortunate."

Brock said the city had been

looking at the project ever since buying Heritage Park, but did not have the money. He said work on the project should begin this summer.

### Cable rate hikes

The timing of MetroVision's rate increase to Farmington Hills subscribers drew the wrath of council.

"This is the second instance of MetroVision coming in and talking about progress with no mention of an increase," he said. "Then lo and behold, there it is."

Vagnozzi, Costick and other council members said the rate increase, which MetroVision announced only a week after a lengthy meeting with the city's cable commission, undermined the work the commission has done and its credibility.

Vagnozzi said the rate increases seem to be a response to now federal deregulation of the industry.

"This is not good business when people are working together and then you do this," he said. "The reason they got that federal law is that very reason."

Farmington Hills will hire a consultant from Montreal to meet with a newly formed citizens' study committee that will consider a new ice arena for the city.

The city will pay Leo Bourgault, president of Les 4 Glaces, an ice arena complex in the French Canadian city, to meet with them. He will earn \$1,000 per meeting plus expenses.

Costick, who along with council members Sever and Lichtman has visited Bourgault's four-rink complex in Montreal, said committee members included builders and former professional hockey players.

The committee's first meeting will be on Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m.



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