

Burglaries up in Hills after 10-year decline

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The end of a 10-year decline in burglary in Farmington Hills doesn't necessarily signal a jump in crime, said police Chief Bill Dwyer.

Dwyer said although city efforts to lower the number of break-ins have paid dividends with lower numbers reported every year, 1994's increase of 10 percent in commercial break-ins and 8 percent in residential break-ins for the period of Aug. 31, 1993, through Aug. 30, 1994, may signal the limit of what police can reasonably do to further lower those numbers.

"This may be more of an indication that we're being lowering the crime rate and that we've gone about as far as we can considering our resources," Dwyer told members of the Citizen's Crime Prevention Advisory Committee Nov. 2.

The committee, which includes representatives from businesses, the schools and residences, advises the department about concerns and helps the department disseminate information about current trends and programs in law enforcement.

Incoming chairwoman, Dunkel principal Pam O'Malley, said the committee's emphasis would be on communication rather than implementing new programs.

Dwyer showed the committee videotapes of the department's new in-car cameras and surveillance system. The cameras, which include an audio system, are in 20 of the department's cars. The department has 4,000 tapes that it rotates, keeps for a period of time, and then reuses. Video footage the department might need to defend against liability lawsuits is kept indefinitely, Dwyer said.

The videos serve as a safety

measure for officers as well as protect the department from false allegations, Dwyer said.

The department paid for the system with drug forfeiture money and general fund money. Dwyer said the cost, approximately \$100,000, would be recouped just by saving the city legal fees and other costs of defending one liability case.

Because of the publicity surrounding the O.J. Simpson case, courts are reporting that more women are coming forward in spouse abuse cases, Dwyer said.

"Spouse abuse arrests are way up since the O.J. arrest," Dwyer said. "Spouses are reporting abuse more than ever before because of the O.J. case."

At the Dec. 7 meeting, 47th District Court Judge Maria Parker will talk to the committee about the problem of spouse abuse.

City, public safety officers meet arbitrator on Nov. 14

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington and the union representing its public safety officers will go before an arbitrator Nov. 14 in an attempt to settle a contract impasse.

Farmington Police Officers Association members have been without a contract for nearly a year.

Formal talks broke off in October of last year, and attempts to jump start negotiations failed. Wages and retirement are major hangups, both sides said. The city is also asking for concessions on health care.

Officers want pay comparable to that of officers in other Oakland public safety departments, said FPOA president James Madigan. A FPOA survey shows officers lagging 6 to 10 percent behind in pay.

The city can't afford the officers' demands, City Manager Frank Laubhoff said. Proposal A put a cap on assessments, which will limit future revenue.

Arbitrator Leo Rayl of Battle Creek will hear both sides at 10 a.m. Nov. 14 in city hall.

"I'm going in optimistic," Madigan said. "I regret we had to do this. . . . It doesn't help relations to go to arbitration."

Said Laubhoff: "We never see arbitration as a win or lose situation. It's unfortunate, but it's the system we have."

It marks the first time the public safety officers have gone to arbitration. The department's command officers went to mediation four years ago.

For a Farmington PSO ranges between \$25,699 and \$38,261.

The city reportedly has drawn

up its own wage comparisons, which include both public safety and police officers in other departments. Cities compared also include departments outside Oakland County, Madigan said.

Public safety officers are trained police officers and firefighters. The approximation of where comparisons are made is also important, Madigan said.

"That's the county (Oakland) we live and work in," he said. "The city has to recognize that, number one, we're a public safety department and we're a public safety department in Oakland County."

Since the last contract, public safety officers have taken on additional responsibilities, Madigan said. They are required to have training in firefighter II standards, defibrillator operation and a state-mandated First Responder program.



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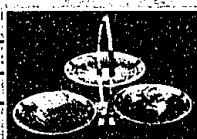
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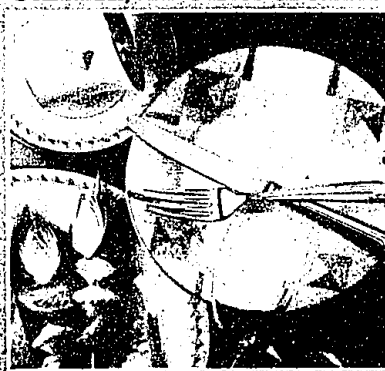
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