

# Farmington Observer

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Recreation tax:** A series of public hearings will help Farmington Hills officials set plans for renewing its Parks and Recreation millage. /A3

**Cable intrusion:** Farmington officials weigh getting involved in potentially costly defense of the city's rights of way. /A2

## SPORTS

**Pro prospect:** Mike Giese, former Farmington High School soccer standout, was drafted by the Milwaukee Wave, a professional indoor team. /C1

**Court contest:** Farmington Harrison played host to Farmington High in an intra-city volleyball match Tuesday night. /C1

## AT HOME

**Keeping trim:** Fringe and other trimming can be put to decorative use in any room. /G1

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

**Theater:** Christopher Plummer portrays John Barrymore in a one-person play at Detroit's Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts. /E1

## SPECIAL SECTION

**Auto show:** The North American International Auto Show opens in Detroit this weekend. See our roundup of new cars and information on the show in today's newspaper.

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## Smash-and-grab trio of bandits caught on film

An in-store video captured three bandits in the act of a smash-and-grab robbery at a Farmington service station.

However, Farmington police have little else to go in the burglary at the Sunoco on the 32000 block of Grand River at 4:12 a.m. Monday, Jan. 6.

Michigan State Police have enhanced the video images as pictures of the suspects, which will be passed out to area police departments.

"Unfortunately, they are not very clear," Deputy Director Mike Wiggins said.

Farmington Hills police report that similar robberies took place at B.J.'s Party Store on Grand River and Smokers and More on 10 Mile Road the same night.

At Smokers and More, 350 cartons were stolen after entry was made through the front door, Farmington Hills police Det. Ron Shankin said. The front window was smashed but nothing was reported stolen at B.J.'s Party Store.

At the Sunoco station, a surveillance video depicts the assailants throwing a rock through the front door window. The three men were inside the store for approximately a minute, which was long enough to steal cartons of cigarettes.

A white van with a stripe on it was seen in the area, according to police reports.

One of the suspects is described as a black male in his late 20s, 6-foot 2-inches tall, wearing three-quarter length tan coat and a stocking cap.

Another is said to be a black male in his late teens or early 20s, 5-foot 7-inches tall with close-shaved hair and wearing a black leather coat. The third suspect is described as a black male in his late 20s, 6-foot tall with a mustache wearing a three-quarter length dark coat and stocking cap.

## Bond push starts at board level



They can't actively campaign to win votes for an upcoming bond election. But board members have plenty of experience as advocates for educational money. They plan to offer objective information.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

When an advisor told Farmington school board members recently they'd have to present themselves as being objective on a proposed bond issue, there were a few puzzled looks.

The idea was somewhat foreign to some trustees, who were extensively involved in past grassroots efforts to generate support for education.

Cathy Webb, Bobbie Feldman,

Linda Enberg and David York were active members of Advocates for Excellence in Education, which was formed as a support group for educational issues in the aftermath of state-aid recapture.

The organization — once 200 members strong — evolved into a citizen's informational group during the district's last millage renewal election in 1992, which passed by a 4-to-1 margin.

Feldman was co-chair of Friends of Farmington Schools, which was a

precursor to Advocates for Excellence in Education and took an active role in a millage election in 1991 to recoup money lost through state-aid recapture. Voters turned down the millage request, but Feldman said it was a good learning experience nonetheless.

"We learned that disseminating factual information to the community is of utmost importance," said Feldman, who was elected to the board in 1993. "We had to learn that we have to make friends with all aspects of the community. That's when we realized we had to get on board with the non-parents as well."

Webb founded the Advocates

See BOND, A6

## It's not official yet

On Tuesday, the Farmington school board approved recommendations from a financial committee to seek a \$110 million bond for building and technology, plus a millage renewal. That means:

- The board plans to take formal action on the bond application during a special meeting 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 13, at the school administrative building, and if:
- The state approves the application after 25 days, then;
- The board plans to vote Feb. 4 to formally call an election, and;
- That election will be either Monday, March 24, or Tuesday, March 25.

## Rest easy



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN LEBLANC

Getting Into It: Denise Albrecht and Vera Heise, both ballet moms, sit at the back of the room watching their daughters practice for a Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation program. Albrecht was mimicking the movements the children are practicing from "Cinderella." See more of the rehearsal on Page A3.

## Police report more drunk-driving stops

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

An increase in drunk driving arrests over the last couple years has gotten the attention of police and others concerned with the problem.

For years before that, the trend nationwide and in Farmington Hills had been toward a decline in the number of drunk driving arrests, and apparently, drunk drivers.

"Arrests had been going down every year," said Sgt. Dennis Grogan, supervisor of the Farmington Hills traffic division. "But for whatever reason, we're starting to see that change."

Based on a 1992-94 statewide traffic crash ranking, Oakland County

has been identified as the county with the second highest number of crashes resulting in death and or injury.

Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Office of Safety Planning, a \$90,000 grant coordinated by the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County was used to pay for overtime of officers in seven police organizations including Farmington Hills. Officers targeted special areas in the city to enforce drunken driving laws and safety belt compliance.

For the Thanksgiving holiday, officers involved in the program made 117 traffic stops checking with an emphasis on drunken driving and seat belt use. There were 76 overtime hours used over the Thanksgiv-

ing holiday.

"Basically there should not be any fatalities because of drunk drivers," said Eileen Weiss of the Traffic Improvement Association. "Oakland County has a high safety belt usage rate."

And over the past several years, drunken driving arrests in Farmington Hills had been going down to a low of 244 in 1993. In 1994 there were 257 arrests for drunken driving and in 1995, there were 315 arrests, a 23 percent increase in one year. There were 321 arrests in 1996.

Drunk Driving Arrests in Farmington Hills, 1992-1996



"We don't really know why there is this increase," Weiss said. "Perhaps people have been more lax in their thinking about it. And officers are

See DRUNK, A6

## Attorney bills leap 58 percent for Farmington

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington was paying its attorney \$31,000 a year — a bargain by all accounts.

At Monday's meeting, Farmington City Council agreed to raise the retainer paid to the firm of Kohl, Secrest & Farmington Hills by 58 percent to \$49,000 effective Jan. 1. The firm's John Donohue is the city's legal counsel.

Donohue and the firm assist the city on general government matters and 47th District Court prosecutions, which have increased consid-

erably in the last few years.

The firm recorded 569 hours worked in 1992. That has risen to more than 900 hours a year. General government matters has increased Donohue's time by 165 percent since 1992, city officials said. Time spent on prosecutions jumped 60 percent since then, too.

The firm's Stephen Meade handles

■ 'I'm still wondering if we make this agreement, we're still going to be short.'

Jim Mitchell  
—councilman, Farmington

prosecutions for the city. He's in court a minimum of half-day every week on those issues, Donohue said.

One reason for the rise is the city made ordinance violations, civil infractions, and \$75 for non-retainer matters. Tickets and meeting out fines.

"We're here and we want to be here," Donohue said. "We want to work with the city in terms of dealing with economic realities we face."

"If we both had our druthers we'd both had taken care of this matter during the normal budget process (during April and May). Our fiscal years are different than yours."

Donohue has served as city attorney since 1988. He does the same work for Farmington Hills.

The new fee sets the hourly rate at \$70 an hour for retainer-billed work and \$75 for non-retainer matters. With the actual hours involved, the rate is more like \$35 to \$40 an hour, Councilman Jim Mitchell said.

See ATTORNEY, A2

## One to watch

As a model, Courtney Kling is used to spending time in front of the camera.

But the Farmington Hills resident hopes her chance to appear on television's "Baywatch" sometime early in February will help launch her acting career.

The 20-year-old won the chance to appear on the beach-based, bathing-suit studded series after a search contest.

She described her role as "a dream come true," according to a press release. "Though I love my modeling career, being in front of a camera and



## FARMINGTON FOCUS

playing a role really adds a whole lot of excitement."

She also defended the show. "People joke about Baywatch and dumb blonds, but I was on the set at 3 a.m. and didn't quit until 7 that evening — everything is orchestrated — I learned a lot and how much work is really involved."

Kling, a North Farmington High School graduate, can also be seen locally in the new Detroit Optometric Center (DOC) "Sexy Specs" commercial airing this month and at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

## Lights, cameras downtown

Work could begin in two weeks for installation of the new SCATS "smart" traffic lights — com-

plete with pole-mounted cameras and computer-directed signals — at the corner of Grand River and Farmington.

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff told the city's DDA board Tuesday that if the Road Commission for Oakland County will begin the 30-day project later this month. If it's too frozen, work will be delayed until April. Originally the project was set for last July.

Although South Lyon is already hooked up to the new system, its installation in Farmington will be the "most congested downtown" so far in the county, Lauhoff said.

Cameras will measure traffic flow and adjust the traffic signals. For example, traffic flow could trigger a longer green light time for westbound Grand River, while cutting the time for northbound Farmington Road during some rush hours.

Pedestrians won't be ignored. They'll be able to override the system by pushing buttons posted at any of the four corners, Lauhoff noted.