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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY

Agenda: The Farmington City Council meets at 8 p.m. at city hall. The public is invited.

WEDNESDAY

You're Invited: The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and the HomeTown Newspapers will host a job fair from 11 a.m. to 7 in the Laurel Manor Banquet and Video Conference Center in Livonia. Sixty-five companies will at the fair representing retail, personnel staffing, banking, hotel management, health care and restaurant industries. Job seekers are encouraged to come with up to 70 resumes and be prepared for on-the-spot interviews. Appropriate attire is recommended.

THURSDAY

Meet: You're invited to attend a town hall meet devoted to early childhood education at 7 p.m. at Farmington High School, 32000 Shiawassee.

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Curtain closes on old theater

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The Old Orchard Theater, which had more openings and closings in the past year than the gates at the Elvis Presley mansion, is shuttered again. As far as the building's future, there's no script available.

An independent theater company's attempt to revive the movie house fell short after only four months. AMC closed the Old Orchard and two other theaters last year.

Toledo-based Great Eastern Theater reopened the 1,400-seat facility in late February and showed first-run films until July. The building on Orchard Lake Road has remained empty since.

"They didn't succeed and they shut it down," said Arie Leibovitz of Arie-EI Productions in Southfield, which owns the building. Leibovitz won't comment on any plans to redevelop the venue, which his company bought from AMC. Great Eastern leased the theater from Arie-EI.

Farmington Hills planning commission

Please see THEATER, A3

Residents want role in project

Residents want a say in how a proposed assisted living center and a new Farmington Players theater will be developed.

'I believe they are trying to address our concerns. I don't think we're there just yet.'

Mary Ann Shepherd
—Resident

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



When it comes to a proposed assisted living center and new Farmington Players theater, nearby residents request more than a front row seat at an upcoming performance. They want to be involved.

Those who live in nearby Kendallwood subdivision made it clear: Before the 4.3 acre development goes forward on 12 Mile Road, their concerns about flooding and the 40-foot height of the three-story assisted living center must be addressed.

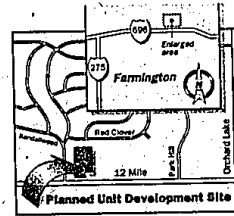
At Monday's meeting, Farmington Hills City Council approved the developer's qualification as a planned unit development in a 5-2 vote. Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and Mayor Pro-Tom Vicki Barnett voted against qualifica-

tion, citing the long, drawn out process involved with PUDs.

PUD qualification merely allows the Sunrise Development, the city and, conceivably residents, to negotiate the plan that includes a 76-unit assisted living center near a new 240-seat theater is the best idea yet to develop the parcel, a Kendallwood association spokeswoman said. In the past, developers have proposed building apartments there.

Two key issues, flooding and the building height, make residents leery.

Kendallwood has a history of flooding problems. The city spent \$23 million on drain improvements in the subdivision, which sits on a flood plain. A new development - no matter how ideal -



will likely increase water runoff, Mary Ann Shepherd said.

"I believe they are trying to address our concerns," Shepherd said. "I don't think we're there just yet."

Sunrise has offered to pay an independent civil engineer - whom homeowners can choose - and have a wetland expert examine the area, which Shepherd said is a flood plain. The developer also proposes a detention pond with three overflow valves - two more than required by city ordinance.

The developer has also whittled the initial 82 units to 76 and offered to shave the building's height by a couple feet.

More must be done, Shepherd said. Kendallwood has offered to work with the city engineering department to impose the strict standards - above existing ones - on this development.

"We expect you to take your yard-

Please see PROJECT, A4

District chief gets nod

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Board of Education, happy with how Bob Maxfield is running the school district, voted Tuesday night to approve a new five-year contract for the superintendent.

"Thank you for the vote of confidence," said Maxfield, who for 1998-99 receives a 2-percent increase on his salary of approximately \$130,000. "I hope this will be seen as truly a statement that we're in this for the long haul. We have much to do before we're done."

Maxfield's contract, which runs through June 30, 2003, was approved 6-0 by the board. President Cathy Webb led the meeting early due to a football injury sustained by her son Matt during prac-

Please see NOD, A4

PART FOUR
OF A SERIES

EDUCATION UNDER FIRE

By TIM SMITH - STAFF WRITER

Staff development has lasting impact

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

In some public school districts, a lesson about how food is digested might be best put across to students through the traditional "three Rs" way.

But teachers in Farmington Public Schools are coached, cajoled and even compelled - through something called staff development - to do things differently, and hopefully with more lasting impact on students.

For example, one third grade teacher in the district instructed students to "fact out what a piece of food would be like going through the system," said Staff Development Director Jerry Fouchey.

"Two kids were portraying a set of teeth," said Fouchey with a grin, in another portrayal of food worming through the system.

Unconventional, yes. But such hands-on, active teaching, the kind the district employs, apparently hits the mark more often than not.

"They know it," Fouchey added.

But Fouchey and other Farmington administrators know this, too: the

kind of lesson described above is viewed as the best way to connect with kids, given what is being uncovered in the area of brain research.

"We double what we know every three and a half years," Fouchey explained.

To empower teachers to keep up the pace, he said there is a staff development "triangle" of curriculum, delivery and student assessment. Each part relies on the other two.

"I can't stand here and say, 'Here are the five steps of photosynthesis. Write them down and I'll give you a test on Friday,'" explained Fouchey. "That (approach) ignores the strengths of many of our learners. It is a real complex process, how we stimulate and nurture (teachers') ability to constantly make it fresh."

Of the three, probably the most frustrating isn't just its assessment. Fouchey said knee-jerk criticism of year-to-year student performance in state standardized tests such as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program is unfair. Instead, he favors waiting a

Purpose of staff development

- Inspiration
- Awareness
- Emerging needs
- Maintenance
- Enrichment
- Remediation
- Employee Induction

Source: Farmington Public Schools

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Jerry Fouchey

while before making conclusions.

Assessing performance in the district over five years would be more meaningful. So would being able to compare apples to apples. MEAP comparisons, for example, do not follow the same group of pupils, whether or not schools follow the same approach to curriculum.

"People get much too twisted up about the details of any one year," he said. "To me, the long distance run is how you measure quality."

Able to adjust

Compounded by increasing student diversity, as well as different learning styles, teachers must know how to "read" the strengths and weaknesses of kids almost intuitively, he ready to teach "on the fly."

Please see DEVELOPMENT, A3

Criminals tune in to easy theft of cell phones

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

More cellular telephones are being stolen from vehicles within the city of Farmington, and public safety Commander Maria Putt said there's a prevailing theory.

There are more cellular phones on the street.

"They're becoming smaller. More people have them," said Putt. "They are more mobile, and people aren't paying attention to where they are stored."

To prove her point, Putt last week walked through a parking lot at Farmington-Nine Mile roads to look for unlocked vehicles with cell phones and other valuables in plain view.

It didn't take long.

"There's one," she said. "And there's also

a signed hockey puck on the seat." Several other cell phones were fully or partly visible from the outside. According to Putt, that's what the criminals do - cruise a parking lot and see what's available.

After the phones are stolen, they usually are sold to pawn shops.

The increase isn't just in Farmington, Putt emphasized. "It's increasing all over the metro area."

Thus far in 1998, there have been more than 60 larcenies from vehicles reported in Farmington, Putt estimated that the total is probably up by about 18 instances over 1997. Most of the time, car windows and doors are not smashed in or broken to gain entry. The criminals merely have to open up and reach in.

Cellular telephones are "on the car seats, or in the console in plain view," Putt said. "The cords are sticking out of the console. It's a crime of opportunity. These criminals - merely go car to car" looking for another victim.

Putt said retail parking lots all over the city aren't the only places the thieves peruse. Cars parked in apartment and condominium com-

Please see THEFT, A7



STAFF PHOTO BY DILL BRASLER

Theories: Farmington Public Safety Commander Maria Putt took Observer staff writer Tim Smith on a tour, to see how often drivers leave items unsecured.

