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of Farmington," McShane said last week. "I find great reward in doing things that improve the city and make it a great place to live."

McShane also strives to give Farmington a strong voice in Lansing. Recently, she challenged state House Rep. Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills) about House Bill 4777, a measure criticized for potentially eroding home rule.

"You can't wait until something gets to this point before you react," McShane told Raczkowski during the council's Sept. 20 meeting. "I really feel it's not the state who should determine our policies."

During an interview at the Farmington Observer office, McShane continued beating the

local drum.

The recent trend of older communities that will receive less state revenue sharing appalls McShane. "That's something we need to keep a close eye on."

Another goal is consolidating school and municipal elections, so they are held at the same time.

"I'd like to see Farmington retain its autonomy," McShane emphasized. "And that's getting so hard."

Helping the small city get its fair share in Lansing is one thing. But McShane continues doing what she can at the local level.

In addition to her time on the city council, which began in 1989 when she was elected to a two-year term, McShane currently

works on Farmington Families in Action (her family grew up here), the Farmington-Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council and the Governor Warner Museum Development Committee, among other endeavors.

She also worked on last year's "visioning" process, part of which residents expressed a desire for the Civic Theatre to continue as a movie house and downtown anchor. So, when longtime owner Greg Hobler opted to sell the Civic, McShane and other city officials knew they had to act. The result, with little public criticism, is that the city owns a landmark entertainment venue.

"The timing was right to purchase the Civic," McShane said. "The price was fair (\$316,000 to

buy, \$300,000 in anticipated renovation costs) and it prevented another business entity from going in there, something less desirable."

McShane also firmly backs the council decision to buy the Civic and hire M.K.A. Inc. to manage it.

"We had to move it along," she said. "A bidding process would have taken longer, thus losing us money."

Meanwhile, McShane has high hopes that renovations and improvements at the Civic will spark a more-vibrant downtown — something she understands is needed.

"That was one of our goals in the visioning process," McShane said. "To bring in more entertainment for the downtown. I feel

entertainment will bring more people downtown."

The Civic is staying. But McShane is fully aware that the city needs to bring in more destination points, whether entertainment, restaurants or new businesses, such as Starbucks and Great Harvest Bread Company.

"We need more entertainment venues, more programs downtown. I'd like to see that."

The Downtown Development Authority could also help pump new life into the city by enticing businesses to stay open later, to perhaps 9 p.m. Various promotional campaigns might help do that, McShane said.

Improving the parking and pedestrian walkway systems also would go a long way toward

energizing downtown after dark.

"In order to progress and attract new businesses there has to be a better parking plan," McShane said.

If movement to revitalize downtown is too slow, McShane can point with pride to what is taking place a half-mile west of the central business district. Efforts to reacquaint residents with the Gov. Warner Mansion... Home of Farmington History... are bearing fruit, she said.

"We've become much more visible," McShane said. "It (the mansion) sets the tone for the character of the city."

McRae from page A1

McRae, 33, is one of five people running for three open council seats in the election Nov. 2.

"I think what I'd bring (to city council) is the perspective from a family that is just starting out," said McRae, who is married and has two daughters, ages 3 and 12 and nine months.

"This is a great place to live... I guess I just want to see the next generation of that happen."

McRae grew up in the Eight Mile-Halsted area. He went to Gill Elementary and Power Middle School before graduating from Farmington High in 1984. McRae speaks of the area in idyllic terms, but is not naive about major issues facing the city. He's attended council meetings and study sessions since announcing his candidacy in August.

He's also followed council happenings on TV.

"I think council, in general,

works very well together," he said. "You always want to have some differing opinions. There seems to be a good discussion and dialogue on issues that come up."

"It seems very civil and very productive in what it gets done." When city council members talked about a passing a bicycle helmet ordinance, McRae admits his gut reaction as a parent was "It's my problem." He questioned whether council should get involved.

He changed his opinion upon further thought and talking with others.

"Something like wearing a helmet while you ride a bike is so basic that it has to be required," McRae said.

"I think the way the police department is going about it, not bringing down the heavy hand and providing helmet shows... it's more educational."

McRae's position on tax abatements is firm. He's against them, even in situations where they could be used to keep a large corporation.

"If you start making exceptions, you're on a slippery slope," he said.

"If that means a company looks elsewhere, Novi or Troy, so be it. We have to protect the tax base that is already here or we're going to have to start raising taxes. I certainly don't want that."

He's not immune to the struggles of operating a business, though.

McRae ran a home-based business for two years before being bought out by a larger firm. He works as a representative for a theatrical equipment supplier.

McRae thought about applying for the vacant council seat in November after Terry Sever was elected to the Oakland County

Commission. Family commitments at the time dissuaded him.

He watched with interest when council appointed Jody Soronen, who pledged she had no intentions of running for election.

"I was truly hoping that the seat would open as it is now," he

said.

McRae said he has no agendas or political ambitions outside of serving the city. He wants to maintain what's right about Farmington Hills.

"The roots go back a long way," he said. "This is a good place to live. We plan to be here for awhile."

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