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explained Hartsock. "All 15 of those I've served with have taken that approach."

According to the still-boyish incumbent, serving at the local level is exactly where he wants to be.

"There isn't any level of government that affects people more than local government," Hartsock said. "With local people, they know what you're doing. ... Serving at the level that I have for so long, they see the more you give the more you get out of it."

"And this community is very grateful for what you do and if you're not doing what you should be doing, they're going to let you know."

If Hartsock is re-elected, one issue he promises to stay on top of is making sure Farmington's downtown district remains intact as the region's anchor.

"Without our downtown, we're just another subdivision," he said. "Without downtown Farmington, we lose our identity, and that includes Farmington Hills."

Hartsock envisions a "leaner and stronger" downtown, one that will bring more folks to the area during evening hours. He is glad that the Civic will be part of it.

With improvements taking place to the Civic, including a reconfiguration of the area and a move to more of a multi-purpose facility, Hartsock sees potential to attract 3,000 more patrons per month and to keep the theater financially viable.

Big potential

The old (theater) industry standard was every dollar spent for tickets would be a dollar spent for concessions. ... Now, it's something like 50 cents per dollar.

Returning to the old standard is "very achievable," said Hartsock, adding that it wouldn't hurt for nearby restaurants, taverns and stores to also think about doing renovations.

One business that immediately comes to mind is Cowley's Old Village Inn on Grand River just east of Farmington Road.

"A lot of the people who go to the Civic are adults who walk right by it," Hartsock said. "To me, it (renovating Cowley's) would be a natural, a potential gold mine. They could be looking at movie-dinner packages."

Whether downtown experiences an early 21st century business

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Bill Hartsock
—Candidate

boom or not, lack of convenient parking will continue to be an issue for the council to address.

"Parking is a perennial problem," Hartsock said. "That's something we'll review time and time again. Parking, traffic flow, pedestrian movement (are) always an issue."

Businesses are landlocked, reducing the likelihood of parking lots being expanded near stores. But, the council veteran added, there is plenty of parking in downtown. The problem is that people have to walk across heavily traveled streets and navigate around buildings to get to their destination.

"At Twelve-Oaks, people will walk as far or farther. It's all perception."

No need to merge

Hartsock, a certified public accountant with Farmington Hills-based PaineWebber, pointed with pride to several recent endeavors that were backed by the public.

"The voters supported us in the decision for the street millage, the road-improvement millage," Hartsock said. "And there has been overwhelming support in terms of our decision with the Civic purchase."

The quick response time of the Farmington Public Safety Department and solid infrastructure, Hartsock said, are other reasons why the city continues to be in good shape and a place people want to live.

Hartsock sees no reason to merge the city's police and fire service with Farmington Hills' larger departments.

"(Public safety) is, without a doubt, the most important service we can offer our citizens," Hartsock said. "We get letters all the time, thanking us."

Last year's major renovation of the public safety headquarters also speaks to the success of, and commitment to, the current system.

Farmington has been Hartsock's home for 36 years and where he raised a son, 20-year-old Christopher.

Community servant

Hartsock was president of the Farmington-Farmington Hills chapter of the American Heart Association from 1996-97, president of the Farmington Exchange Club (1997) and chairman of the city's retirement board from 1996 through 1998.

Currently, Hartsock is in his seventh year as chairman of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

His position with SWOCC is one reason why he is hesitant about pushing to videotape city council meetings, he said.

"Novi and Farmington Hills have televised meetings, and it does serve its purpose. In our situation, it'd be hard to measure how beneficial it would be. We would hope that people that are interested, have something to say, would come up to the council meetings if they can."

"On the other side, it would be nice to turn on the TV and ... if it catches their attention for a short period of time, that would be a benefit."

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Both Mifaud and Eagle Principal Arnie Rubin said the visit, part of Farmington Families in Action's Sober October programming, will only help the children develop a positive, healthy attitude toward law enforcement officers.

"Basically, I would hope they'll remember the way they saw Rocky and I today," Mifaud said afterward. "And, if they ever need to talk to a police officer, that this will make us seem more approachable."

Monday also was "Wear Red Day," another Sober October event. And the visit by Mifaud and Rocky perfectly fit in with that, the principal said.

"What we want to talk to our children about is making healthy choices," Rubin said, adding that children are never too young to visit police officers. "And we thought this would be fun for the kids, too."

Each student petted Rocky on the way out of the cafeteria, with some even getting a happy lick for good measure.

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