

# Farmington Observer

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## Keeping in touch

In an effort to keep in touch with the people we serve — namely, our readers — the Farmington Observer staff is returning to a method we hope will help us do just that: citizen advisory panels.

The panel will consist of approximately eight to 12 members representing a cross-section of citizens from around the community. The panel would meet several times throughout the year, discussing with the editorial staff the content of the paper, what readers would like to see, what the paper is doing right and what it's doing wrong.

We already have several volunteers, but are still looking for a few more. We hope to have the first meeting by the end of February, beginning of March. Meetings would probably be scheduled quarterly, perhaps with more frequent meetings at the beginning of the process.

Anyone interested in serving on such a panel is invited to call the Farmington community editor, Joanne Maliszewski, (248) 477-5450, or e-mail her at [jmaliszewski@homecomm.net](mailto:jmaliszewski@homecomm.net).

## Cell tower proposed for center



**A proposed cell tower at the William Costick Activities Center has caused some concern and confusion. The city council in 1998 agreed to a lease with Nextel, but the Sisters of Mercy who are next door aren't happy.**

BY JONI HUBBARD  
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A lease agreement that would put a 120-foot cellular phone tower at the William Costick Center in Farmington Hills has some city officials and residents scratching their heads.

The central issue has to do with the city's dual role as landlord and governing authority, and it's not easy to understand.

While the record shows a lease was approved in November 1998, not everyone who voted for it thought they were

giving final approval. Council member Vicki Barnett believed officials would get another shot at it.

"My impression at the time was that this was not a final deal," she said. "At no time did I assume that was the last pass I got at it."

In Barnett's mind, the proposed lease was something like the first draft of an ordinance. Council members approve a first reading simply to move an item along for discussion. Any concerns can be addressed and changes made with the second reading and final ordinance adoption at a later date.

**Please see related story page A6**

"There are some times we vote for things in the first stage, and when it's in the final stage, we may not vote for it," she explained.

At the time, then-Mayor Aldo Vagstad voted against it based on his concerns for the residents at Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, a residential facility for retired Sisters of Mercy. His concern persists today, as do the concerns of the home's residents.

In a statement issued Jan. 28, spokesperson Sharon Graganta said the community already has two leases, one with Ameritech and one with Cellular One, for towers on its campus at 11 Mile Road.

"In 1999, Ameritech twice requested

**Please see TOWER, A5**

**Proposed site of 120-foot cellular phone tower**  
William Costick Center in Farmington Hills



## Board of Review scheduled

BY TIM SMITH  
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The city of Farmington won't mail out 2000 assessment notices until Friday, Feb. 25 or Monday, Feb. 28, said

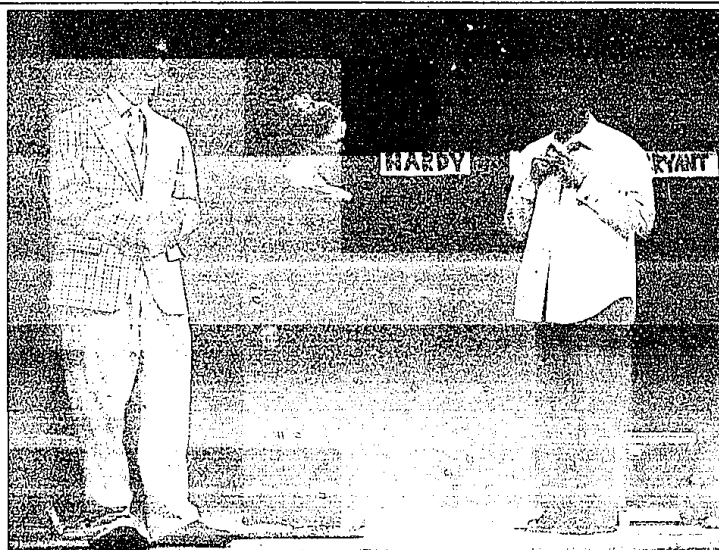
**FARMINGTON**

John Sailer, city assessor.

When owners of residential, commercial or industrial properties open up their envelopes, most should expect to see an increase of 1.9 percent, Sailer said.

That means that increases in the state equalized value of homes don't cause as much concern for homeowners because their taxes won't go up more than the rate of inflation. This year, that's 1.9 percent. Under Proposal A,

**Please see BOARD, A9**



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRENNER

**On stage:** In the Farmington High production of "Damn Yankees," the Devil, played by Matthew Guynn, introduces Lola, played by Julia Macmillan, to Joe, portrayed by Gabe Holland.

## Behind the scenes With 'Damn Yankees'

BY TIM SMITH  
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When stage lights shine 8 p.m. Thursday during the opening scene of "Damn Yankees" at Farmington High School, the audience will see disgruntled Washington Senators fan Joe Boyd and his wife, Meg, sitting at opposite ends of their living room. He's watching — of course — a baseball game. She's knitting and unsuccessfully trying to catch her husband's attention.

**For cast members, please see A12**

In front of the stage will be the Pit Orchestra, directed by John Parkinson. On stage will be top-quality props and sets. Cast members such as the Boyds, Gabe Holland and Meghan Osborne, won't have to worry about makeup being the wrong shade or brushing vintage 1950s costumes against wet paint on



**Artful:** Pamela Ringstrom helps Devin Perdue with stage makeup. In the background, John Sloan III is powdered by Sarah Grossbart.

## Richards in final field

BY TIM SMITH  
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And then there were four. From an original field of 27 candidates — 14 of whom were interviewed — Farmington Assistant City Manager Bill Richards is one of only four finalists for the job of Novi city manager.

Richards learned Monday night he is the lone Michigan finalist still in the running for the position soon to be vacated when Novi City Manager Ed Kriewall retires effective Feb. 11.

"I'm obviously very excited and very gratified, and personally and personally, to be selected," said Richards Tuesday. "I consider it to be a great victory to be the only finalist from Michigan."

Others still in the picture to succeed Kriewall are Richard Helwig from



Bill Richards

**Please see RICHARDS, A9**

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## Blakeney's: Changing times close well-known Hills eatery

BY JONI HUBBARD  
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Chalk up the loss of a Farmington area institution to changing times.

Customers of Blakeney's Ranch House on Grand River in Farmington were stunned to find the doors of the restaurant closed after the first of the year. Owners Robert and Diane Blakeney didn't give much of a hint that the landmark business, opened 31 years ago, would be no more.

"We'd been there a long time, and that was probably part of it," Robert Blakeney said. "It was time

for maybe a life change."

Still, he said, it wasn't easy to let go. The place on Grand River had been part of Robert's life since it was built in April of 1968.

Blakeney's was founded in the 1930s by his parents. Bill and Kay, who have been active members of the community since moving here with their business.

"My husband and I opened the Ranch House on Davison. He built it the year before we were married," said Kay. "We built the one on Grand River

**Please see BLAKENEY'S, A12**



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRENNER

**Closed:** Blakeney's, an area institution for 31 years, closed after the first of the year.