

A day on the Hill

Members of the Farmington and Farmington Hills City Councils met with Michigan's Congressional delegation during the National League of Cities convention in Washington, D.C., last week. Councilman Barry Brickner took photos during meetings with Senator Debbie Stabenow (right, top), Congressman Joe Knollenberg, (bottom) and Senator Carl Levin (right, bottom), who is pictured with Farmington High student Areej Al-Jawahri. Areej was among several students involved with the Hills Youth Council who were invited to attend the convention.



Farmington officials talk beautification

BY TIM SMITH
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The future makeup and mission of the Farmington Beautification Commission is still being studied by city officials. But, during a study session prior to Monday's council meeting, sentiment was clear to somehow continue the annual beautification awards program.

City council members and administrators will work on appointing a "stop gap" committee to judge homes and businesses for the 2001 program, which likely would be downsized considerably from the awards programs of recent years.

At the same time, officials must map out a future direction of the commission - disbanded by council members in early February due to low membership and a growing sense of burnout by members.

"We probably need to continue the awards," said Mayor Pro Tem James Mitchell during the study session. "A break might be harmful to the continuation of the beautification commission."

Mitchell and others agreed that a larger group might be necessary to resume official commission work. At the time the commission was disbanded, there were only two members; it is eligible to carry nine.

"Maybe looking at a larger commission might help," Mitchell said. "But then, you have to find the people."

as well as specific instructions to future members about what they would be asked to do.

Councilman Arnie Campbell led the charge to make sure there is some kind of recognition ceremony this year.

"The crucial thing is the awards," Campbell said. "Maybe we could have an subcommittee for now at least. That's the most critical thing, because it's coming right around the corner."

Mayor Bill Hartsock said volunteers would need to be gleaned, perhaps from a Friends of Farmington roster. "to drive around on a Saturday, with coffee and a clipboard" to judge noteworthy efforts by residents and businesses to spruce up their properties and enhance the city's overall image.

Councilwoman Mary Bush suggested that, for the 2001 program, perhaps only the two top awards should be presented.

Officials will see what kind of criteria are in place for the Farmington Hills Beautification Commission and will gather information from the Michigan Municipal League and Chamber.

According to Lauhoff, the council wants to take its time deciding how the next incarnation of the beautification commission is structured.

"It's an important commission," Lauhoff said. "And I don't think the council wants to rush into it. By taking it slow, I think we'll wind up with a much better final result."

The topic will be picked up for discussion during another study session, scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, April 2, at Farmington City Hall.

Job fair considered a success; 1,000 candidates turn out

Although the recent Farmington Public Schools Recruitment Fair 2001 drew about 1,000 job candidates - 200 fewer than expected - the program was considered successful.

"We had plenty of talented candidates who came out (to Farmington High School)," said Larry Lobert, the district's executive director for human resources. "Now we're figuring out where we're going to be on (available) jobs" for the 2001-02 school year.

Candidates scheduled their interview via the Internet, and talked about particular jobs with prospective supervisors.

The program was available to those seeking employment in myriad positions, not just teaching jobs.

An abundance of recruits for elementary school teaching positions participated in the recruitment fair.

Lobert said several areas where finding new teachers is a struggle for all districts, including Farmington, are special education, high school math and science and Computer Aided Design and technology.

The majority of job hopefuls attending the job fair are residents of southeastern Michigan, he added.

Look for our award-winning Hometown Life section on pages C6, C7, C9 and C10.

Council clears dust from road issue

BY JONI HUBERD
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What started four years ago with one vote against assessing residents who live on gravel roads for dust control became city policy Monday night.

Officials voted 4-3 to make the application of calcium chloride, done three or four times a year on the city's 21 miles of unsealed roads, part of the road maintenance budget. It's a torch Mayor Nancy Bates carried alone, until council members Vicki Barnett, Barry Brickner and Christopher McRae joined the effort.

McRae was the latest convert, having voted in favor of the special assessment district just last year. Whether it was having a

year of experience, watching workers fill cracks in the pavement in front of his house without his having asked or talking to city staff about the issue, he said he was convinced the city should pay.

Councilman Jerry Ellis remained unconvinced. "Unpaved roads are maintained every year, and we're not talking dust control," he said. "It's for the sole purpose of (the homeowners') benefit, that we do this."

Ellis said it costs the city less per mile to maintain paved roads, because they don't require maintenance for up to 15 years. He said he had been assessed for dust control and hadn't minded paying, because it was to his

benefit.

"We're talking about paying \$23 or \$24 a year for this," he said.

Councilman Barry Brickner argued that because calcium chloride applications are repeated and don't last, they should be considered "maintenance" rather than "capital improvements." Councilwoman Vicki Barnett agreed.

"Something that needs to be applied three to four times a year (is) a maintenance issue," she said.

Barnett also objected to residents being treated differently than others affected by special assessment districts in several ways:

- They haven't petitioned for the improvement.
- The way their lot sizes are calculated for the assessment is done differently.
- Residents whose streets are scheduled for paving in a given year aren't assessed for dust control, even though several applications may be made before pavement is laid.

"I don't think that's fair, and I don't think it's right," she said.

Resident Paul Blizman, who attended the meeting because his neighborhood had petitioned to have their street paved, said

he'd lived on a gravel road for 26 years.

"Dust control made living on a dirt road bearable," he said. "I derive the benefit. I don't mind paying for it."

Other residents pointed to Director of Public Works Tom Biasell's statement that clouds of dust can impair the vision of motorists who travel on dirt roads that haven't been treated.

Cathy Hicks, who lives on an unpaved street, said in addition to the safety factor, dust control was important for residents with breathing disorders, like asthma or emphysema.

Because she couldn't control the traffic on her street, which she said is used by many as a cut-through to major thoroughfares, Hicks felt she shouldn't have to pay to control the dust those cars kick up.

The Farmington Hills Council of Homeowners Association has always been clear about its position against assessments - and presented it one more time Monday night.

"If it is a public safety, health and welfare issue," said COHA President Ed Spring, "it's our position, as a city, you should take care of it."

The cost of dust control is about \$60,000.

COUNTY NEWS

Automation Alley-Oakland County Michigan's nationally renowned technology consortium has received a \$400,000 federal grant from the United States Department of Commerce Market Development Cooperator Program (MDCOP).

Matching funds from the organization's budget, along with in-kind services from members and the County, will provide a total of \$1.2 million over three years for export and trade activity to benefit more than 1,100 qualified companies, officials said.

Funds will help facilitate export activity from high-tech companies in Oakland County for products and services, such as: Computer software and services, auto parts and accessories, engineering services, electronics and industrial process controls to countries around the world.

Integral to its strategy, the consortium also will coordinate trade missions to coincide with upcoming regional trade shows in Germany and Mexico.

Other trade missions planned included AutoMechanika-showcasing automotive parts and accessories in Mexico City in 2001, an CeBIT, the world's largest trade show for computer software and services in Hannover, Germany in 2003.

Automation Alley is a cluster of technology-driven companies located in Oakland County. The consortium is an alliance of private, educational institutions and Oakland county governmental businesses dedicated to strengthening its economic base by developing and promoting Oakland County's first-class technology cluster.

Scouts on hand for Archer visit

BY TIM SMITH
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On his way to the front of Farmington City Council chambers, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer warmly shook resident Bill Liba's hand.

Then, Archer accepted a proclamation honoring Detroit's 300th birthday and looked out into the audience, where three members of Boy Scout Troop 45 were seated.

"As I look out I see three young people," Archer said. "May you be around to celebrate our 350th anniversary... and I hope you remember this historic occasion when the city of Farmington and the city of Detroit came together."

Liba wasn't too surprised that Archer would take time to shake his hand.

"I campaigned for him when he ran for the Michigan Supreme Court," Liba said. "It was real nice for him to come out here. He's a real great guy."

Almost an awe were the three Boy Scouts, working on a report about how governmental meetings work.

Power Middle School students Robert Gearardo, Michael Gariepy and Farmington High School student James Gallagher agreed that seeing the mayor of Detroit was an unexpected treat.

"He was really pretty cool," Gallagher said, nodding.

Archer from page A1

Archer said work is being done to improve roads from the suburbs to downtown, and that many exciting programs are being planned for the 300th birthday celebration.

Civic minded

"We hope you and all of your residents will feel comfortable enough to come down to Detroit to celebrate our 300th anniversary. I want you to know our infrastructure is still wearing well... We will provide for you some exciting opportunities for you and your families to participate in."

Hartsock presented Archer with a framed proclamation, an Afghan featuring Farmington historic sites and free passes to the Civic Theatre.

Not to be outdone, Archer extended an offer to the council and city administration to come down to Comerica Park to attend a complimentary Tiger baseball game.

Later, in the hallway outside the council chambers, Archer said he wanted to accept the honor himself.

"This is the first time that I've been called and invited to be a recipient (in Farmington)," Archer said. "I can't tell you how

pleased I am. It is an important landmark, the city's anniversary. And to be mayor at this time, I just felt it (the proclamation) was such a privilege that I wanted to come out and accept it personally."

The first

Farmington apparently is the first suburban community to so honor the Detroit tricentennial, which is taking place all throughout 2001. Archer wasn't certain whether other cities are planning similar proclamations.

"I have no idea, but if they are, I'll be there," Archer said, smiling.

Archer did say he hopes to bring President George W. Bush to Detroit to "spend some time with us, and... to have everybody come and enjoy what will be a historical event."

Prior to the meeting, Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said all of the suburban communities need a strong Detroit connection should be willing to show support for the major city.

"We're all neighbors and we should support each other," Lauhoff said. "I think that's what Mayor Archer has done in his tenure as mayor, and I think it's incumbent on suburban cities to do the same."

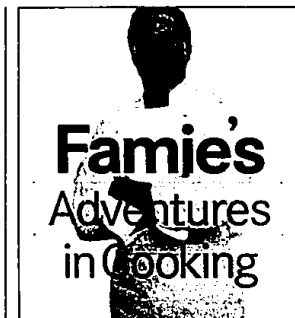
Keith Famie book signing

Saturday, March 24

10 am to Noon
Livonia
At Mall Entrance

1 to 2:30 pm
Birmingham
in Home

Celebrated chef, television host and world traveler, Keith Famie, recently drew national attention as a cast member of TV's second "Survivor" series. He's gathered favorite photos, memories and, most importantly, recipes, for his new book, *Famie's Adventures in Cooking*. Mr. Famie will happily sign your book purchases.



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