



Mansion moment:
Brenda Bauman spends her lunch break on the grounds of the Warner Mansion. Beginning next week, visitors will be able to enjoy Cafe on the Porch in the evenings.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUE BUCK

Hills residents give city services high marks

BY ALICE ASHMORE
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Farmington Hills residents are happy with their city services—at least according to a recent city survey. Eighty-two percent of citizens ranked services as either "good" or "very good," according to a report by the Boston-based auditing firm of DMG-MAXIMUS.

"The results were overwhelmingly positive," said Travis Miller of DMG-MAXIMUS.

Miller delivered the report to the Farmington Hills City Council earlier this week. The six-page questionnaire was distributed to 4,237 households.

"Every five years we are obligated to do an audit of management services," said Assistant City Manager Dana Whinnery. "This year we took sort of an 'outside-in' look at the city."

"From the community service point-of-view, it was good to see that we were meeting people's needs. We are hitting the mark," said City Manager Steve Brock.

However, some taxpayers were not quite as happy as others. Eleven percent of those surveyed rated the city's services as "fair" and 3 percent as "poor."

Another 4 percent responded with, "didn't know." The Farmington Hills Police Department was the highest ranked city department measured in the survey.

Both the police and fire departments were rated "good" or "very good" by over 80 percent of respondents.

"These departments provide an amazing level of service,

especially with regard to fire-fighter staffing," Miller said.

The survey had a 35 percent response rate, resulting in a sample of 13 percent of all households in Farmington Hills.

Miller said it was a remarkable response rate. "I've never seen one this high."

DMG-MAXIMUS examined all operations in all departments within the city with the exception of schools and courts.

Work began on the audit in February 2001.

"We literally collected boxes of data," Miller said.

The audit also compared the city of Farmington Hills management practices to the best management practices of other cities in the nation.

"This is really a very well run city," Miller told council members.

"We stand up very well against other communities," Whinnery said.

Whinnery said that Miller was actually taking practices in use in Farmington Hills and suggesting them to other cities.

However, Miller did have a few criticisms to deliver.

He suggested a more "proactive" management of goals and objectives in the City Manager's office.

Other suggestions included having Central Services update the technology plan on a yearly basis and move to re-bid current service contracts.

For the Clerk's office he suggested the implementation of digital record keeping and an automated phone attendant for off-hours and busy periods.

Miller suggested the City

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Steve Brock
—Hills city manager

Finance Department should bid banking relationships, and also track the field time of city appraisers.

"The fire department will need to increase staffing to handle ALS (Advanced Life Support) transport and should track incident data more closely," Miller said.

He also suggested that one Farmington Hills Police communications staffer could be eliminated on the late shift.

"It would be an understatement to say we have a disagreement with the department on this matter," Miller said.

In Special Services, Miller recommended the elimination or re-taking of one of the Assistant Director positions.

Brock said Friday that his staff is already examining the feasibility of Miller's recommendations.

"I want to congratulate you on a fine staff. These are not words I use often," Miller said.

"We're pretty pleased with the results of the audit, however, we recognize there is always room for improvement," Whinnery said.

The management audit cost the city \$60,000 to complete.

Mansion offers Cafe on the Porch

BY SUE BUCK
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Mark your calendars for Cafe on the Porch from 7-11 p.m. every Tuesday at the Gov. Warner Mansion starting July 3.

"Come to the porch," invites Brian Golden, a member of both Blue Circle and the Gov. Warner Mansion committees. The \$5 per person charge gets you a seat on the porch, along with unlimited cold refreshments, coffee and tea. There are no discounts for certain age groups, Golden said.

The gatherings were inspired by members of the Blue Circle, a group of Mansion supporters who wanted to push ahead plans for the Cafe, because it wasn't included in this year's budget.

The name of the group was selected at random by Denise Tawney, who is also on the Warner Mansion committee, at the request of co-chair Jim McGlinchey.

Other Blue Circle members are: Tracy Freeman, Linda Chiara, Ellen Abou, Margaret Howard and Mark Pierce.

Proceeds will go to the mansion's general fund after the group pays itself back for start-up costs. These might be as high as \$500, Golden said, including signage, fliers, tables and chairs, table cloths as well as the refreshments.

Unlike coffeeshops which sometimes are noisy and smoky and close to the main road and squealing tires, Golden thinks

this will both provide a respite for those who want to be alone or the conduit for meeting others from the community. It's also a chance to share the history of Farmington.

They believe the Warner porch and gazebo will be more appealing and will allow discussion later into the evening. This is a venue to meet people and have conversation. It also puts the city's premier historical site in the spotlight.

"This gives people a reason to come to the mansion," Golden said, adding the mansion isn't expected to be open on these Tuesday nights.

The mansion is open 1-5 p.m. Wednesdays and 1-5 p.m. the first Sunday of the month.

BUSINESS NEWS

National award

Jacobson Communications, a Farmington Hills-based company specializing in corporate communications, recently won awards from the Association of Women in Communications, the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the International Film and Video Festival.

Momentum, a global newsletter written, designed and produced by Jacobson Communications for Visteon Corporation, won a Clarion Award for best corporate internal newsletter in Women in Communications' national competition.

The employee publication also received Silver Quill awards for both editorial content and design in the IABC district competition, as well as an Award of Merit from the Detroit chapter.

Jacobson Communications, with recently-acquired Ewald Motion Pictures, earned a third place award from the International Film and Video Festival in a category that drew 1,500 corporate video entries from 33 countries. The award-winning training video and CD about patents and other forms of intellectual property was produced for Visteon Global Technologies.

In addition, Jacobson Communications received an IABC Detroit Award of Honor for its new website, www.jacobson.com. Founded by Dian Jacobson in 1977, Jacobson Communications is an international editorial, design and multimedia consulting firm providing integrated communication products, corporate strategies, on-site editorial staffing and a full spectrum of print and video creative services. In addition to its Farmington Hills headquarters, the company has a multimedia studio in Livonia, a subsidiary in the U.K. and affiliates in Germany and France. For more information, call 473-6010 or visit the company website at www.jacobson.com.

Accidents down despite start of road work season

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Traffic accidents in the city of Farmington were down through the month of April compared to last year during the same time period, according to Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss.

That amounts to a total 200 total accidents year to date through April compared to 223 during the same period last year.

Broken down, that's 22 non-fatal accidents this year compared to 24 last year; 88 reports of property damage last year and 99 last year. Private property accidents numbered 90 this year and 100 last year.

"Construction traffic isn't affecting us in terms of accidents," Goss said. "We haven't had any major construction projects."

That will change in July, as construction begins between Eight and Nine Mile Roads. It is expected to continue until October. "There will be one lane open each way," Goss said.

Resurfacing of the streets in the Bellaire subdivision is drawing to conclusion, Goss said.

The city did some patching on Farmington Road between Shawwassee and 10 Mile Roads for about a two-week period. The Drake Road Bridge project in Farmington Hills also impacted Farmington during its 60-day span.

"They closed the Drake Road Bridge and detoured traffic down Farmington Road," Goss said. "We didn't see a major increase in accidents." It re-opened the first week in June.

The department looks at high frequency intersections every three months, Goss said. "Usually when we do that, we find that the highest-frequency intersections are below the county average."

Farmington has some unique traffic areas that are cause for concern, including the hill on Shawwassee Road, the point where 10 Mile ends at Farmington Road and starts up again at Haledale Road, and the downtown center, Goss said.



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