

IN THE PAPER TODAY

OPINION

Authority: How state lawmakers vote on a proposed airport authority could determine what kind of mark County Exec Ed McNamara and Gov. John Engler leave on the facility. /A8

ARTS

Fine selection: Viewers of this year's Michigan Fine Arts Competition probably will walk away shocked, but that's exactly what juror Nick Cave had in mind when he selected work for the upcoming exhibition. /B1

AT HOME

Carved in Michigan: Woodworkers from the metro-Detroit area are once again busily preparing for their upcoming showcase to benefit ill children, Wood 2002, March 10 at the Livonia Senior Center. /C1

HOMETOWN LIFE

Watching you: Images of local private investigators vary from the gumshoe with his feet up on a desk, smoking a cigar in a dreary office, to high-tech spies. /C4

Reaching out: Special Writer Ruth Moehlman looks Black history and the important part Farmington played in the story. /C4

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Hills city council denies rezoning

Officials say Manor's request could open other doors

BY PAUL R. PACE
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Saying they regretted the action, Farmington Hills City Council members denied granting a rezoning request by Wilson Kassab to allow his business, the Farmington Hills Manor, to serve lunch to the public.

Kassab plans to put an addition to the facility that also offers catering. Architect Robert Allen, representing Kassab, spoke to the council Monday, asking for the zoning change to the banquet facility on Orchard Lake near Lamar.

He said asking the council was "we believe the most expedient way to do this."

Allen noted the previous owners of the building, the Elks Club, offered lunch to the public and that is all Kassab wishes to do.

But under the current Office Service zoning, the Elks were operating what was considered a private club. A change to a B-3 general business zoning on the property would allow anything from drive-through restaurants to auto repair shops.

■ 'This is an issue of law. As much as this is painful (to deny the request), I cannot support it.'

Nancy Bates
Mayor

Spot zoning

City attorney John Donohue urged the council to deny the request because if Kassab left it would allow other businesses to use the site for something else.

"I think candidly that this is spot zoning," the attorney said. Spot zoning typically means a business is out of line with the existing land use nearby.

In this case, the business buffers some residential homes. Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said Kassab is a "great community citizen, but therein lies the difficulty" in making a decision.

Mayor Nancy Bates said Kassab's character is not an issue.

"This is an issue of law," she said. "As much as this is painful (to deny the request), I cannot support it."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DECKER

Denied: Farmington Hills City Council turned down a rezoning request by the owner of Farmington Hills Manor, located on Orchard Lake Road near 10 Mile.

Councilman Jon Grant said the request is clearly spot zoning.

"It would be totally inappropriate land use," he said.

Lamar Street resident Ron Achtenberg said he didn't have an objection to a restaurant being operated by Kassab, but had an issue as to what type of business could operate near his home in the future.

"It could include a strip mall," he said.

Council, in a 6-0 vote, denied the request. Councilman Jerry Ellis abstained from the discussion and the vote. His law firm represents Kassab on some legal issues.

Council members urged Kassab to seek a variance in the zoning from the Zoning Board of Appeals to serve food to the public at the Manor.

After the denial, Kassab said he would likely not seek a variance before the ZBA. He declined further comment.

Winter's last blast?



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DECKER

Stopping by the woods: The snow causes hassles when you're on the road but it can offer moments of peace, too. After Tuesday's brief winter storm, a man walks his dogs through the snow-covered landscape of Shiuwassee Park in Farmington.

House plan would care for displaced Northville patients

BY SUE BUCK
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An innovative bipartisan plan that would allow hospitals to help families with loved ones who are mentally ill is under discussion, along with the planned sale of Northville Psychiatric Hospital.

However, State Representative Andrew Raczkowski said the idea is still in the "baby step" phase.

"The innovative plan that we are working on the House side is this: if we do end up selling Northville, hospitals, especially community hospitals like Crittenton, Botsford, Sinai Grace, St. John Systems have a lot of open bed space," said Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills). "We're talking to the hospital association about potentially opening up a single floor in each hospital in different regions and have consumers—your loved ones—stay at those hospitals as long-term care facilities."

Raczkowski made his comments at a public forum Feb. 20 hosted by William Allen, interim executive director of the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority. The seventh in a series of monthly meetings was held at the William Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills.

■ 'If it works, it will be a real win-win for all parties involved.'

Andrew Raczkowski
State Representative

The Authority is dedicated to providing assistance and information about services, answering questions and providing community support.

Raczkowski explained the plan's advantages are: it saves the state money, which could be put back into the community mental health program, and patients get better care and are closer to families.

"If it works, it will be a real win-win for all parties involved," Raczkowski said. "You're thinking this is a proposal waiting to be passed. There will not be any closure of Northville, at least with my vote, until we have a solution for those individuals, a full, long-term plan. The hospitals are very much into it because they would receive more money...than they would be for a patient on Medicaid or Medicare or from the federal level," Raczkowski said.

A whole floor could be set aside for mental health care, he said. Patients who were violent would be sent to another facility, which he did not name.

The industry responds

Peg Reihmer, vice-president of planning, marketing and development for Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills said Monday that this was the first she heard of the idea. She planned to contact Raczkowski's office for further information.

"We have a governor who is trying to reduce state costs," Reihmer said. "It's not as simple as consolidating and making a floor available. It would be quite an undertaking. They may be looking at the occupancy rate."

She cited a number of factors to consider. Nursing shortages may affect occupancy rates. It's often necessary to isolate a patient, which cuts down on the number of beds available. Also, beds are needed to handle fluctuations in numbers of patients.

"Community hospitals may not be the appropriate location," Reihmer said.

Patrick Foley, spokesman for the Michigan Health and Hospital Association, a trade association for 144 non-profit hospitals, called it a "brand new idea being floated about in various circles."

There's been no determination where the hundreds of Northville patients will be placed, he said, adding that

Please see PLAN, A3

City taps Warthman for PSO-1 position

BY SUE BUCK
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Farmington Public Safety Officer Ted Warthman was promoted to Public Safety Officer-1 on Feb. 11.

He replaces Jim Madigan, who retired last October after 27 years of service with the city. Madigan now works as a court officer in 47th District Court in Farmington.

In the absence of a Commander, a PSO-1 serves as the shift supervisor.

"A PSO-1 is in charge about eight days a month," Warthman explained.

Warthman views his promotion as a natural progression in his five-year career with the

Farmington Public Safety Department. As an officer he learned the ins and outs of the profession.

"You begin to feel you should move up the line in the management chain," Warthman said. "It's exciting."

Warthman comes from a line of family members who hold management positions in other companies like Eaton Corp. and Strohs.

Don, his father, was born and raised in Farmington and graduated from Farmington High School in 1959, Warthman said.

Ted Warthman is the first in his family to work in public safety. Warthman has also worked as a reserve officer for Farmington and was a paid-on-call Novi firefighter for two years before being hired by Farmington.

Warthman and wife, Stacey, have a 21-month-old daughter, Hannah.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DECKER

Moving up: Ted Warthman is the new sergeant at the Farmington Police Department.