



Safety Award

The Farmington Hills Police Department was awarded the Richard H. Austin Long-Term Traffic Safety Award for their proactive approach to traffic safety during the recently held Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission awards luncheon. Pictured are GTSAC representatives and designers and the award recipients (from left) Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land; Gloria Jeff, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation; Linda Scarpetta, representing the Michigan Department of Community Health; Lt. Colonel Pete Munoz, representing the Michigan State Police; Sgt. Patrick Comini of the Farmington Hills Police Department; Gary Gibbons, GTSAC local representative and chief of the Meridian Township Police Department; Hollace Spencer, director of the Office of Services to the Aging; and Betty J. Mercer, GTSAC chair and director of the Office of Highway Safety Planning.

Walnut Lake Road mess to yield relief

BY SUSAN B. TAUBER
STAFF WRITER

A great deal of patience is needed by motorists along Walnut Lake Road between the West Bloomfield Township Hall complex entrance and Farmington Road.

Construction crews are slowing down the normal commute through that area as they lengthen the passing lane on the westbound side of Walnut Lake Road at Farmington Road by 1,000 feet.

The lane under construction is currently dirt, with bright orange barrels warning drivers not to get too close to the edge of the paved road. The drop-off to the unpaved section is steep, something a few unfortunate drivers have already discovered.

Township trustee and Planning Commission liaison Stuart Brickner said plans for the work for a long time.

"There have been a lot of complaints about traffic coming out of the township hall complex and approaching Farmington Road," he said.

The extended lane, permitting people to get into the right



Crews are busy extending the right passing lane on westbound Walnut Lake Road at Farmington Road.

passing lane to avoid drivers turning left onto Farmington Road, will ease a lot of congestion, but I think traffic on westbound Walnut Lake Road from Orchard Lake is an issue as a whole, especially near Shenandoah Country Club, with the construction of the Chiddens center.

Township Supervisor David Flaisher said tri-party funds are paying for the road work on Walnut Lake Road. That means the township, the Road Commission for Oakland County and Oakland County are splitting the engineering

and construction costs equally.

Thomas Bird, Planning Department director, said the township's portion of the road improvement is about \$100,000. He expects the lane construction on Walnut Lake Road to be completed in about a week.

The township approved another tri-party road improvement project, which, Bird said, will be forwarded to the ROC for approval.

This project will extend a lane 1,000 feet on eastbound Maple Road from Daly Road to Orchard Lake Road.

County Executive Patterson faces reckless driving charge

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

An attorney for county Executive L. Brooks Patterson filed arraignment papers on his behalf Wednesday, thereby saving Oakland's most prominent elected official the embarrassment of personally appearing on a reckless driving charge stemming from his traffic stop for erratic driving near his home in Clarkston.

Thomas J. Ryan filed a waiver of arraignment — commonly known as an arraignment by mail — shortly after noon in 51st District Court in Waterford Township. A plea of not guilty was included with the waiver, and no bond was set. The case was scheduled for pretrial conference at 1:30 p.m. July 17.

It is assigned to District Judge Richard D. Kuhn, a former Republican Oakland County Commissioner and the son of a prominent circuit court judge.

The arraignment papers were a response to the criminal misdemeanor charge authorized the previous day by Magistrate Wanda K. VanderWeer. Patterson, 64, is charged with reckless driving, which carries a maximum sentence of 90 days in jail, a \$500 fine, a mandatory suspension of his driver's license — or all three — upon conviction.

Conviction on reckless driving also requires six points be added to the driver's license. Drivers who amass 12 points face suspension of their license. A spokesperson for the Michigan Secretary of State's office Wednesday said Patterson has a

clean driving record.

The warrant against Patterson was authorized after an Independence Township man testified he saw a black car being driven in an erratic manner about 11:30 p.m. June 2, first in Waterford and then in Independence Township. The driver of the black car was later identified as Patterson, who was returning from a golf outing in Birmingham.

Arthur Sparkman, who lives near the Dixie Highway condominium complex in which Patterson lives, said he was driving when he saw the car driven in a manner that disregarded public safety.

Sparkman made a 9-1-1 call that resulted in a sheriff's deputy from the Independence substation, James Bowie, stop-

ping the vehicle in the condominium complex within walking distance from Patterson's home.

Bowie, with the approval of a sergeant, subsequently gave Patterson a ride home — something that resulted in both of them being suspended by Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard, who said they failed to follow established procedures requiring a field sobriety test. A video of the traffic stop showed an apologetic Patterson acknowledging having had a "couple glasses of wine" at the golf outing in addition to pain killers he said he took for a torn rotator cuff.

Patterson was not available Wednesday, and he did not return phone calls.

The county executive did hold

a news conference Thursday where he acknowledged deep regret for the June 2 incident and vowed to alter his behavior.

The sheriff initially said drunken driving charges against Patterson would be difficult to sustain because of the lack of a blood-alcohol test or other evidence normally obtained in a field sobriety test. Bouchard, however, asked the Oakland County prosecutor's office to review the case.

The case was referred to Waterford Township after the county prosecutor and attorneys for Independence Township both said they could not review the case because of possible conflicts of interest.

Waterford Prosecutor Walter Bedell said Wednesday he initially wanted Patterson charged

with violating state law that prohibits driving when a combination of alcohol and a controlled substance would materially affect the driver's ability to operate a motor vehicle. That charge is similar to OUIL (operating under the influence of intoxicating liquor), the township prosecutor said, and carries comparable sanctions.

Bedell said he abandoned that approach after Patterson disclosed the pain killers he took at the golf outing as an over-the-counter medicine, not a prescribed medication.

Bedell said he discussed the charge with Patterson's attorney Tuesday morning. "There is no agreement," he said. "And I reserve the right to alter the charge in the event additional evidence comes to light."

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