

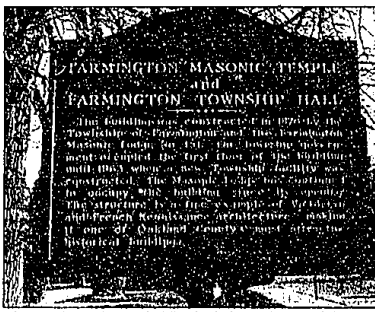
HISTORY

FROM PAGE A1

industrial corridor along Grand River. "It was a Wild West kind of thing," Marks said of the time when the township need to get a referendum to Lansing to hold a township election. It asked residents if they wanted to turn their township into a city instead.

He said members of that commission beat Farmington city officials to the Capitol steps in just under an hour to get the process in motion. Out of such drama, Farmington Hills was born on July 1, 1973.

Marks, who has served on the City Council, said it was Bob McConnel, a former Oakland County commissioner, township supervisor and board member, who really deserves the credit for taking the bill by the horns with the changeover.



This marker is near the Masonic Hall at Farmington Road and Grand River in downtown Farmington.

McConnel is retired and living in Florida today. "I think the city has grown just the way we wanted it to grow," Marks said. "I have been here 35 years," he added. "You couldn't have a

better planned city than we have." Former Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, now state representative for the Farmington area, said he can remember when an election was almost called off in the township because the gravel roads were too muddy.

Over the years, lots of fields turned into subdivisions and roads became paved. Even though Vagnozzi failed in bids for township supervisor in 1964 and in 1966, he said he was glad Farmington Hills became a city.

He noted Quaker Town and Wood Creek Village also joined in the city proposal. There was a concern before the election that taxes would jump, Vagnozzi remembered. But thanks to city leaders deciding to maintain a 65-percent residential and a 35-percent business ratio in the community, residential property tax rates have remained low, he said.

Farmington Hills Finance Director and Treasurer Chuck

FARMINGTON HILLS THEN AND NOW

Table comparing 1973 and 2003 (est.) data for Farmington Hills: Full-time employees (160 to 391), Part-time employees (15 to 470*), Police officers (47 to 118), Police reports (3,365 to 34,360), Paid on-call firefighters (79 to 72), Full-time fire staff (1 to 44), Total fire runs (321 to 197), Non-fire runs (253 to 6,391), Population (51,502 to 84,000), Total housing units (16,023 to 32,500), Total millage (6 mills to 10,2221 mills), General fund/budget (\$3.21M to \$49.74M), No. of voting precincts (21 to 27), No. of registered voters (24,882 to 58,000).

* includes seasonal employees Source: City of Farmington Hills

Rosch started with the township a couple years before it became a city.

He said thanks to good planning, the city was able to offer the benefits of city living with services like road maintenance and community programs, while still being in a somewhat rural atmosphere. "We brought in services like an inner city, with cultural activities, and soccer and baseball (fields), little parks in subdivisions," he said. "We developed a senior center and now a cultural division. "We have a record of good service."

Vagnozzi remembers a city ordinance that required new

subdivision developments to have two trees planted in the front yard of every home.

"Later, we had the concept of open space," he said of designing subdivisions with common, grassy areas.

Marks noted that while becoming a city could have brought about ill will between Farmington and Farmington Hills, the two cities work well together today and share the upkeep of libraries and the 47th District Court.

"I don't think you'll find too many people in the city that are disappointed."

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FIREWORKS

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breaking the law may look up and find an officer in their yard, he said.

"We have to be conscientious about it," Goss said. "We consider this a public safety issue. If a Roman Candle lands on a roof, we can be looking at a house fire. Someone could lose a finger or an eye with a cherry bomb."

Police typically confiscate fireworks. Depending on the gravity of the situation and damage, officers can be ticketed under state law, which calls for a misdemeanor of 90 days in jail and/or a \$500 fine, Goss said.

Michigan residents can use flat paper caps, toy trick noisemakers like Party Poppers, Champagne Party Poppers, Whipper Snappers, Pop-Its, and Fun Snaps, sparklers, cylinder and cone fountains, toy snakes and toy smoke devices.

The following are descriptions of illegal devices: ■ Cherry bombs — a red sphere about one inch in diameter

■ Cornet (or Mine) — a cylinder containing a star, attached to a wooden base. Upon ignition, the star is thrust 50-100 feet in the air and continues to glow as it slowly falls to the ground

■ Firecracker — a little noise-making cylinder up to 1.5 inches in length, often strung together with a fuse

■ M-80 — up to two inches in length, it is usually a red cylinder with a fuse coming out the side

■ Bottle rocket — a cylinder, frequently topped by a cone to stabilize its flight, attached to a stick

■ Roman Candle — a 5-12 inch tube containing alternating levels of compacted black powder that shoot single stars out of the top when lit

■ Silver Salute (M-100) — a silver cylinder with a fuse coming out of the side containing large quantities of flash powder

■ M-160 and M-1000 (quarter stick) — looks like larger versions of the M-80 and M-100 and have extremely high-risk factors for crippling and disfiguring injuries

■ Torch — a 6- to 12-inch tube filled with color compositions and ending in a handle. When ignited, streams of colors come out of the top of the tube.

For more information, call Goss or Warthman at (248) 474-6500. Or, call the Michigan State Police, Fire Marshall Division, at (617) 322-1924.

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INCREASES

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"The recycling rate increase is based on the additional cost of service with Waste Management as specified in their contract," said Farmington City Manager Vince Pastue.

"The city has historically incorporated the cost associated with residential recycling service as a special assessment on the July tax bill. This increase corresponds directly with the increased cost for this service. This rate increase would take effect July 1 and appear on the July 2003 tax bill."

The Civic Theatre admission increases 9.1 percent to \$8 from \$7.25.

The Civic Theatre admissions fee increase is based on the deficit elimination plan for the Civic Theatre Fund," Pastue said. "The city has been gradually increasing the admissions fee over the last few years to help reduce the operating subsidy to the Civic Theatre."

It is not anticipated that the increase, expected to generate an additional \$20,000 annually, will result in a dramatic reduction in attendance. Pastue noted that with the exception of the Civic Theatre admissions, all of the increases will directly offset increased service costs passed along by the service providers.

The water and sewer increases reflect the increased cost of service provided by the city of Detroit, said Pastue. "The city of Farmington, along with other suburban customers, has seen a dramatic increase in the Detroit rates over the last three years."

While the proposed increases are significant, they are essential to maintain the existing level of services and financial stability for the various funds, Pastue said.