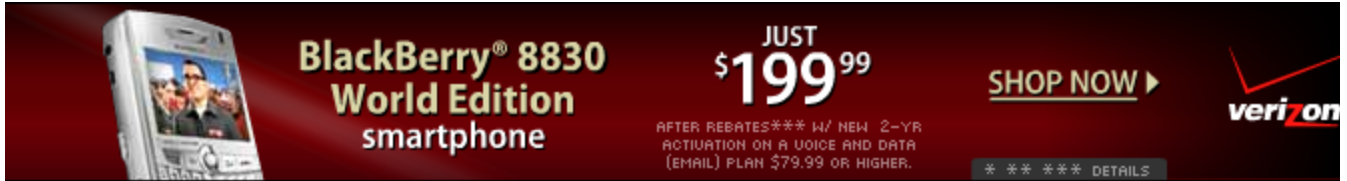


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Liquidation sales loom at area Farmer Jack stores

June 6, 2007

BY MARGARITA BAUZA

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Farmer Jack employees have been told they will be laid off as early as June 29 and liquidation sales are expected to start Thursday at most of the chain's stores in metro Detroit.

All stores will likely be sold or closed by July 7, according to employees and those watching the sale of 66 local Farmer Jacks.

"There will be more store closings than projected, and most of those will be in underserved areas," said Ken Dalto, a Farmington Hills consultant who specializes in the retail market.

Dave Long, a commercial real estate broker who represents banks inside Farmer Jack stores, says he has received lists of stores that will close. The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., Farmer Jack's owner, is constantly revising the list, he added.

Long declined to say which stores were on the list.

About 45 stores will be sold. An estimated 25 of them will go to Kroger, the dominant grocer in metro Detroit. The remaining stores to be sold are expected to go to Hiller's, Spartan, Nash Finch and independents. About 20 unsold stores are expected to go dark, Dalto and Long said.

A&P could not be reached for comment Tuesday, but has routinely refused to comment about the fate of the stores.

Several bidders who must remain anonymous because of confidentiality agreements with A&P said the company is still negotiating bids for the stores and most recently began negotiating leases, a sticking point in closing deals.

Farmer Jack observers say the stores' leases are expensive. The company pays between \$7 and \$13 a square foot for stores that average 50,000 square feet.

Long said store closings will have a profound effect on Detroit's retail market.

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Detroit Free Press

Farmer Jack stores, which anchor many area strip malls, draw between 15,000 and 20,000 customers a week.

"If Kroger takes over, the landlord benefits," Long said, adding that a new anchor will attract more stores to the area and existing ones will get more traffic.

If the stores go dark, neighboring retailers will see a dramatic decrease in traffic and landlords will likely need to reduce rents.

Farmer Jack stores will need to sell as much inventory as possible before they are closed or new owners take them over, Long said.

Winning bidders will have to be careful not to lose customers, he said.

"The existing staff at these stores is an asset," Long said. "Whoever is buying these stores, whether it's an independent or a national chain, you want to have as smooth of a transition as possible. You want the shopping experience to be as pleasant as possible."

Dorothy Bibbs, 55, of Detroit said such a transition could determine whether she will continue shopping at the Hazel Park store.

"I've always shopped at Farmer Jack," she said. "I'll have to wait to see what the new owners are like before I remain a committed customer."

Tammy Liberty, 39, of Ferndale who was shopping at the Madison Heights store Tuesday, worries that she will lose her bonus-card credits if a new owner takes over or if the store closes.

"It sucks," Liberty said. "I've shopped here for quite a while now. I think whoever buys here is going to end up losing business. There are a lot of Farmer Jack customers that would prefer things stay as Farmer Jack."

Contact **MARGARITA BAUZA** at 313-222-6823 or mbauza@freepress.com. Staff writer Darrell Hughes contributed to this report.

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dennyjames

After years of incorrect pricing, errors in ads and employees that are less than helpful, farmer jack, like sanders bakery, jacobsons, and crowleys to name a few, and then hudsons which has been sold so many times its like a bus that it is unrecognizable, is closing. you can see that years of poor management and upper management sucking the life and money out of the corporation, has taken its toll. almost every trip i have made to farmer jack in recent years has resulted in items being priced wrong, rotten produce and items always out of stock. most of these problems come directly from the top. hopefully whoever takes their place will try to improve on this and give some nice, friendly people a job.

Posted: Tue Jun 12, 2007 3:15 am

bikerbill

What exactly IS a foreign car or truck these days? Ever look at the content of the parts on the window sticker? They don't make the parts locally and many are made somewhere else. Are Canadian parts foreign?

It is really a bigger problem than that. Anyone, and I do mean anyone who sits back in 2007 and says, I have a good employer and he is going to stand back of me for 30 years so I can retire, is spending too much time in the garage with the engine running smelling exhaust.

That day is over!!

So you stayed at Farmer Jacks and went thru the motions stocking shelves or bagging groceries thinking this job will be here forever unless I get the boss mad and so you did nothing for YOURSELF to keep yourself marketable to any other job. You didn't keep on educating yourself so that one day, if the job you were doing got gone, you would have another one you could turn to. Who is kidding whom?

THERE IS NO JOB THAT IS SECURE at any employer anywhere in Michigan, and perhaps the nation. Get that thru your thick skulls. No union is going to protect you from a company that goes away.

You need to keep on marketing yourself and refining your skills and keeping an eye on the economy, and yes electing people into office who know how to run a business, not just look good on TV or who is a good orator (that is someone who can speak well to a crowd). Ask yourself the hard questions...when has our Senators and Representatives brought a real job to Michigan? What has our Governor done to bring jobs to Michigan, and perhaps more importantly when has she met with the top employers to see what they need to STAY in Michigan and to keep Companies and their employees from leaving? If you didn't look at these questions before you voted, then whom do you blame when F/J and others close up shop? Don't hand me our policies didn't bring on the end to economics in Michigan; that is crap. Anyone with half a brain knows that what WE the PEOPLE do is what matters.

We all ride this big boat together and what we do and how we do it matters. When you buy a Toyota, remember that it could come back to bite you in the behind over time. When you vote for the wrong persons remember that it could have long term effects on your job and your security. When you stop in the back room and take an unauthorized smoke or stand around and do nothing on the job and the job then doesn't get done right or doesn't get done at all, the company looses and if the company looses they aren't going to be around anymore to pay your paycheck. When as the last time you worked a full day...and actually worked a full day? Is it any wonder your job has gone away?

Stop whinning about loosing your job because you didn't understand that slapping around customers was not only stupid but could have long term effects and help bring Wally world into your neighborhood and begin selling Chinese candy on the shelves.

YOU DID THIS TO YOURSELVES. Now my mother always said that you make your bed then you get to sleep in it. If you didn't make it correctly then you will find the sheets on the floor in the morning.

Stupid is, as stupid does. But don't worry...your governor will simply raise taxes and more of your unemployment monies will be spent on 7% sales taxes and income tax and the laundry list will grow.

In other words, you are being handed your hat...have a safe trip to some other state.

Posted: Mon Jun 11, 2007 8:25 am

Col Klink

If it's only 15% downriver I'll let yawl get on their case regarding foreign vehicles. I will stick to the areas where 60% drive foreign vehicles.

Posted: Fri Jun 08, 2007 5:36 pm

Angry

Col Klink why are you stereotyping people? I live downriver and 85% of us down here drive American. This is Ford country. 😊

Posted: Fri Jun 08, 2007 10:56 am

Col Klink

Don't forget to take your Honda and Toyota with yawl when you move to a better state.....

Posted: Fri Jun 08, 2007 10:18 am

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