

editorial opinion

Closing junior high was a correct decision

It was a hard, tough decision. That's the way Farmington School Board Trustee Gary Lichtman described the board's decision to close Farmington Junior High School on June 30.

A hard and tough decision it was, indeed. But it was a necessary move that residents should support.

A school closing always is a dramatic situation, especially when the oldest school in the district is shut down.

While attending this week's meeting, at which the board voted 5-1 to close Farmington Junior, I could feel a wave of insecurity ripple through the audience. Parents pleaded, cajoled and yelled in defense of the old building.

Kids cried.

But declining enrollment and a budget cut to the bone ominously loomed over the last few years as an omen of things to come. The cold facts can't be denied—even in the face of the dramatic pleas made this week.

While it was the parents and students from Farmington Junior who packed this week's board session, it will be other parents and students who will flock to future meetings to plead for their schools.

Farmington Junior won't be the last school in the district which doors have to be closed. Residents should brace themselves for that.

Through these hard times, residents should remember that the school district will survive. Guys like Business Manager Bill Prisk and other administrators have been around a long time.

Whee! Wheels are rolling

With gasoline prices due to rise later this year, it's refreshing to see that one element of the environmental movement hasn't faded. We refer, of course, to the surge of enthusiasm for bicycling.

Avon Township is implementing its bicycle route plan. Southfield has a series of designated bicycle routes, western Wayne County again will have weekend "bike days," and even part of the I-75 freeway is slated to have a bike path.

Public officials who promoted these projects are to be complimented for catching on to what cyclists knew all along. Bike paths and designated routes please the public, and they're sure cheap compared to those concrete roads that cost millions per mile.

A bike route can be a specially-built lane separate from a road, a designated lane, separated



By STEVE BARNABY

It was their recommendation to close the building. They care about students, yet they see the Farmington Junior closing as the most efficient way to continue economical education throughout the district.

You had to feel pangs of sympathy for the kids who got up there and made a pitch for their school. They talk about school spirit, unity and what great teachers they've got. More than any one else in that room, they meant what they said. The closing will be the toughest on them.

When a person is 12 or 13-year old, there isn't anything more important than close friends, school activities and teachers admired as if they were gods. It's about the first time one feels so deeply and honestly about life.

It's up to everyone concerned to make these kids feel welcomed in their new school next year.

from motorized traffic by a paved lane marker, or simply a route with sign along a road.

The rules for bicyclists also cause intra-family arguments every year, and we get calls from folks who were told at some remote time that bicyclists are supposed to ride on the left side of the road against traffic. It's not so. Bicyclists should ride with traffic.

It's not hard to remember the rules if you just think of the rules for motor vehicles. Bicyclists should stick to their lanes and not ride two or more abreast, they need light at night, just like cars, they must observe stop signs and red lights, just like cars.

Then there's the most elementary rule of all, so simple that it's never been written into the statutes or ordinance books. Be courteous, and not a road hog.

Voters sending a message on taxes and school growth

The voters have said it about as plainly as they can.

In Livonia they said yes to a 17.3-mill property tax renewal for the schools but turned thumbs down on a 3.5-mill increase.

In Rochester it was yes to a 7.9-mill renewal and no to a 2.4-mill increase.

Farmington School District won a four-mill renewal safely but didn't ask for an increase.

The Southfield school board made the anti-common-sense decision to ask for a 7.15-mill renewal and a 2.6 mill increase in one package and lost the whole thing.

West Bloomfield asked for three new packages and lost all three.

Wayne-Westland got a 21-mill renewal and didn't ask an increase.

Walled Lake won a 10-mill renewal and lost two increases.

ANYBODY SEE a pattern?

Look at it from the average voter's point of view.

His state taxes—which provide a good portion of schools' budgets—are not going down. Indeed, his state income tax went up after the sales tax on food and drugs was removed.

His basic property taxes aren't going down. Indeed, they are rising as inflation pushes up his home's state equalized valuation.

He's not sending more kids to school as he was in the 1950s and early '60s, so the schools can't claim they've got more eager little minds to educate. Indeed, enrollments are declining.

Yet in most cases, when school districts are asking for higher tax rates, they're not proposing new programs. Rather, they're saying they need higher tax rates just to keep the same programs. In other words, it's going to cost more money just to stand still educationally.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS can give you some extraordinarily mind-boggling explanations. The state school aid formula is a killer. Schools lose four times as much state aid for every student lost as they get for every student gained, they'll tell you.



Tim Richard

That still doesn't explain why're all that tax money is going.

They'll also talk about the simple business tax and how schools will lose business inventory and equipment as a source of property taxes later this year.

That problem is still under investigation in Lansing, no answer there yet for a person who's still trying to figure out why he needs to pay more taxes to have his school stand still.

LET US LOOK in another direction for a more basic answer.

Since 1960 our nation's gross national product—the sum total of goods and services—has risen 2.77 times. The automobile industry's contribution to GNP has risen 2.98 times.

State and local government's share, however, has soared 3.45 times. What that means is that no matter how hard we work, state and local government spend it faster.

The real value of our GNP, as distinguished from the dollar value, is rising about three percent a year. That's our so-called "productivity" increase, and it's hardly a good performance.

Any price hike in excess of three percent is probably inflationary unless the producer can prove it's increasing its own efficiency more than that.

Meanwhile, the voters have made it apparent they have drawn a line. School folks can request, and newspapers can endorse, all the millages they want. The voters aren't fawning off blindly. They're paying very close attention. They seem to be saying they won't spend more money to get the same level of services.



Watch for petition to ban non-returnable bottles

Remember the old Burma Shave signs? Spring has sprung. Grass is riz. That's where last year's litter is.

One of the grimmest things about spring around here is to see the masses of ugly litter sprangled all over once the landscape is freed of its white covering of snow.

Somehow cleaning up our land by getting rid of the litter is something all of us keep hoping will happen someday. But that someday never seems to come. Bills have been introduced into the State Legislature for several years now to require deposits on beverage containers, to be refunded when the container is returned, and to ban the sale of pull-top pop and beer cans.

Lobbyists have always then flocked around the bill, pulling and hauling the public interest in favor of the special interest, resulting in the eventual quiet demise of such legislation.

Continuing episodes like this give grounds for skepticism that our democratic system as often works to benefit special interest pressures as it does to help the general public.

THAT'S WHY we all owe a big pat on the back to the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, which has finally decided to do something direct about the continuing litter scandal.

Last week the 100,000-plus organization of conservationists and sportsmen decided to launch a petition drive to put the issue of banning non-returnable bottles and pull-top cans on the ballot.

Thomas L. Washington, executive director of the MUCC, is full of hope that the required 212,561 valid signatures of registered voters can be put on petitions by the deadline of June 4.

Gov. Milliken, who has been working unsuccessfully with a bi-partisan coalition of legislators to yank this bill out of its grave in the House Consumers Committee, endorsed the move and became the first to sign the petition.

THE ARGUMENTS in favor of putting the proposition up to a vote of the people are overwhelming.

First, the people clearly want to do something about eliminating litter from their landscape. A poll taken last year by the highly respected Market Opinion Research company showed that

Observation Point



By PHILIP H. POTTER

nearly three-fourths of the respondents favored a law banning the sale of non-returnable bottles and cans. What is more surprising, more than 80 percent of respondents indicated that they favored such a law even though it might increase the cost of a bottle of pop or a can of beer by around five cents.

Second, the evidence is clear that a ban on non-returnable bottles and cans does work in cleaning up the landscape. Oregon Gov. Tom McCall, who has supported such a law in his state, recently reported that the act "has created employment. The price of beer and soft drinks is not higher. Our roadsides are cleaner."

Third, banning non-returnable bottles and cans would result in an enormous saving of energy. In 1972 beverage container production in America consumed six million tons of glass and 575,000 tons of aluminum. The amount of energy needed to make these raw materials into cans and bottles was equivalent to 279,000 barrels of oil per day!

THE MUCC effort deserves praise. Banning non-returnable bottles and cans, thereby cleaning up our land, is an idea whose time has come. The public favors the step, and only special interest pressure has prevented passage of a law in this area.

Anyone in this area can obtain petitions by writing to the MUCC, Box 2235 Lansing, 48911 or by calling 517-371-1041.

Local MUCC affiliates, conservation and environmental groups, or other groups planning to circulate petitions are invited to call us at the paper. We'll do our best to take a note of when and where you are circulating the petitions and run these notes as soon as our deadline schedule permits.

Maybe, if we all pitch in, we can pitch litter out.

The follies of fashion—paying to carry an ad

For more than an hour, I sat in amazement at the Gucci store in New York City.

Everything on their shelves had their initial or their name on it—shoes, belts, neckties, luggage, key rings, handbags, desk accessories and what-have-you.

During this period, hundreds of persons were storming the place so that they could pay premium prices to help this manufacturer advertise his own goods.

But that's fashion.

Gucci isn't the only one doing it. All of your famous fashion designers are now initializing their products in a prominent place so the wearers can proudly boast they are wearing top-of-the-line merchandise, without saying a word.

SOME DESIGNERS are more subtle than others. While Gucci emblazons his initials on products, Lily and Pucci write their names into the design of the fabric.

Bill Blass and Pierre Cardin put their initials on buttons for menswear.

You really have to know a person well to find out where Christian Dior puts his initials on pantyhose.

The initial business has developed another thriving industry. There are stores all over New York carrying imitations. For half the price, you can find Gucci-type bags with a single G instead of the double G. You can find look-alike Louis Vuitton bags with VV instead of LV, at a discount. Mark Cross's MC becomes WC on the imitations.

WITH THE AMOUNT of merchandise people were purchasing at Gucci's, I felt that at their prices they ought to adopt a policy that the casino use in Las Vegas. If you are able to spend enough, they should pay your way to New York.

Eccentricities



By HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

To show the degree to which the fashion-conscious set goes, I heard a story about a local orthopedic surgeon on a trip to Chicago.

It seems he was in Gucci's store on Michigan Avenue and observed a businessman trying on a pair of Gucci shoes.

A bit later, the doctor was in another shop which sold imitations and saw the same man, again trying on shoes.

The man shopping for the imitation shoes did not observe the good doctor in either establishment, but the doctor overheard the man say to his wife, "I don't really like the imitations as well, but the price is so much more reasonable."

A LITTLE WHILE later, the doctor happened to walk into a Walgreen's Drug Store and noticed the same man sitting there, sipping a Coke with his wife and wearing his new imitation Gucci's.

The doctor walked by their table, stared at the shoes and said, "They don't look like real Gucci's"—and walked past.

The man probably never wore the shoes again. The whole approach to labeling merchandise in a very public way seems to be the height of arrogance to get people to pay a premium to promote the manufacturer's own advertising.

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