

editorial opinion

Council vote signals air of hope for Hills

Gulp, gasp, grimace. Those are the best words I can think of to describe what went on at the most recent meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council when newly elected Mayor Keith Deacon dropped the bombshell by voting for Joan Dudley as mayor pro-tem.

In case you missed the show, Deacon fooled everybody, including himself, undoubtedly, by casting the tie-breaking vote for Mrs. Dudley, rather than political ally Jan Dolan.

DEACON'S ACTION HAS to be one of the more gutsy moves I've seen in recent times. It would have been worth a million bucks to be inside Deacon's head in those few seconds before he cast his vote.

In the short run it would have been a lot easier for Deacon to vote with his political buddies Earl Opperthaus, Bob McConnell and Mrs. Dolan. No telling how they will react to him in the coming week at council sessions.

But in those few seconds when Deacon covered his face with his hands you can bet he was thinking of Fred Lichtman's acid tongue. Joanne Smith's stalwart and militant liberalism and Mrs. Dudley's flaring temper.

Those three rather strange and diverse political partners have formed a coalition which is bound and determined to keep the city moving.

This is not to say that Deacon will always vote with the trio. But now he can be his own mayor and vote the way he feels is right on upcoming issues. He owes no one a debt.

ALTHOUGH IT IS NAIVE to think that the mayor's and mayor pro-tem positions don't hold political implications, at least Deacon's move has set the tone for orderly progress on the council.

With this break in political alliances, man-



dated by Deacon, now the council can address itself to the important issues facing the city—development of a park system, a human rescue service, improved roads and senior citizen housing.

Congratulations, Mr. Mayor. May all your decisions be so wise.

Will wave pool go with public?

The proof of the pool will be in the using. The Oakland County Parks and Recreation has opened a facility that is a rarity in the country—a wave action pool at Waterford Oaks Park.

Swimmers who have never felt the pound of an ocean's surf or the splashing delight of diving into breakers on Lakes Michigan or Huron in August may enjoy, for a small fee, that thrill at the park at 2800 Watkins Lake Road in Waterford Township.

The idea was controversial, as have been several of the Oakland P&R projects.

Whether the critics or the parks commission is right remains to be seen. The public will ultimately determine whether the wave pool was a good investment.

Hush now, wagging blindly, we'd have to bet the parks commission will prove right in assessing the public's recreational needs.

Conventions vs. democracy

It's political convention time again. The Democrats will meet next week in New York City, and the Republicans will meet next month in Kansas City.

A lot of money will be spent to further thwart the will of the people.

If you've never been to a political convention, you ought to try it sometime. All it takes is one to make you want to join the drive for direct election of the president by the voters, and the nomination of the parties' candidates by a single national primary election.

IT WON'T BE as bad this year at the Democratic convention, since it appears that the man who will be nominated has garnered the most popular votes in his party in the various state primaries.

However, he has not garnered more than 35 per cent of the votes cast for a Democratic candidate and really, then, represents a little more than a third of the people in his party who bothered to vote.

It will be worse in the Republican convention because the candidate, in a very tight election, will actually be nominated by the voters, and the delegates who were never elected to anything except convention delegates in very closed caucuses.

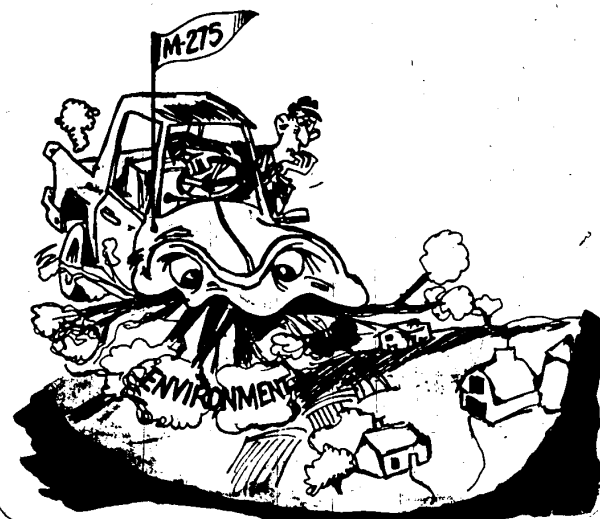
Delegates to national conventions are apportioned in a variety of ways, but primary based on the number of seats each state has in Congress.

In the case of the Republicans, since they have not elected a majority to Congress in a couple of decades, most of the delegates who will choose the Republican nominee will be from areas that will not support the candidate in the November election.

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QUICK, PUT UP A STOP SIGN!



M-275: Road for the sake of a road

M-275, the proposed expressway to link I-96 and I-75 through western Oakland County, is an issue which has been simmering for a long time.

The main argument for the project is that it is a logical extension of the I-75 expressway now under construction in western Wayne County and southern Oakland County, linking Monroe on the south and Novi on the north. In this plan, it is interrelated with the long-standing hassle over the extension of Northwestern Highway, which would be a major connector for the proposed M-275.

Most if not all of these arguments came under a cross fire at a hearing set up by the state highway department on June 24 in Walled Lake. Even though the hearing was held in what amounts to secrecy (this newspaper was not informed of the schedule), both the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and the East Michigan Environmental Action Council, located in Troy, blasted the proposal.

Their reasons included destruction of the environment (especially a bog near Walled Lake), high noise levels, increased tax costs for local residents and property owners, and another corridor for "white flight" from Detroit.

ANY BALANCED evaluation of the M-275 proposal must take these arguments into account. An even more important point, particularly for people who live in northwestern Wayne County and southern Oakland County, is that of traffic congestion.

Anyone who has to drive on Haggerty Road, Pontiac Trail or Maple Road around rush hour has lived through one of the worst traffic jam problems in the entire metropolitan area. A strong argument can be made that M-275 would relieve this congestion by drawing traffic off the narrow roads and onto the multi-laned freeway.

The MUCC testimony at the public hearing made the perfectly valid point that "for every traffic jam M-275 would relieve, it would soon create two more somewhere else." But try telling that to someone who has been trying to get home in that area.



by PHILIP H. POWER

AND, indeed, the MUCC advocated at the June 24 public hearing what it calls the "do-nothing alternative" toward M-275.

In response, the environmental impact study commissioned to examine the consequences of M-275, attacked this notion: "Decreased accessibility resulting from increased travel time requirements would deteriorate advantageous characteristics of the project area and of the Detroit Metropolitan Area as a whole for the continued residential development

and for maintenance of pleasant residential surroundings.

After taking a while to puzzle through this officialese, what it seems to mean is that the highway department wants to build highways.

BUT FOR WHAT? And for whom?

The logic behind building expressways, in the last analysis, falls into one of two kinds of arguments: 1) To promote swift flow of existing traffic; 2) to encourage development.

As for the traffic flow argument, the Highway Department's proposal for M-275 makes some sense to relieve jams on southern Oakland County roads. It does not make sense when it tries to pretend that M-275 offers a way to bypass the metropolitan area for traffic coming along I-75. But it is just as effective—and much less expensive—to use I-96 and then northbound US 23.

The encouragement for development argument is harder to deal with, as one's position depends largely on whose ox is being goaded.

For homeowners who prefer the peace and quiet of the countryside, or for those in search of calm recreational sites, the M-275 proposal is clearly wrong. For those who have an interest in development in the western part of Oakland County, the positions are reversed.

On balance, however, what we probably do not need more of in this already overcrowded metropolitan area is expressways.

M-275, as proposed, would accomplish little other than the temporary alleviation of traffic jams. On the negative side, it would spoil a lot of beautiful land, contribute to sprawl, and serve only the interests of those promoting development. The proposal should be stopped.

Dawdling DNR enforces the law when it's too late

A wildlife biologist from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has written a note politely hinting that I should lay off whooping up enthusiasm for Nahanni, the educational wolf from rural Oakland County who was such a favorite among area schoolchildren.

The DNR, you'll recall, ordered Nahanni grounded after a biting incident involving not Nahanni but Caesar, the Westland lion. Nahanni's owners, Bob and Beth Durnan of White Lake Township, asked for (and got) many letters from local folks asking for a change of heart at DNR. Alas, they have lost, and Nahanni today stays in her pen with her adopted puppy, Silver Chief.

Charlie Shick, the DNR biologist, wrote me: "It is unfortunate that the people who will be putting pressure on us to create a double standard in enforcing regulations didn't have the opportunity to read the attached news items."

Attached are articles about Caesar's biting the four-year-old deaf girl and a wire service story from New Jersey which reports a wolf conformed on a year-old girl when the child was held near it for picture-taking.

WELL, CHARLIE'S "double standard" remark made me gag just a bit. If anyone is guilty of a double standard of law enforcement, it's the friendly DNR. Consider: published feature stories on Caesar the lion's display during warm weather of 1975. DNR said nothing about it.

Last October, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers published the feature on Nahanni, including a picture of her in a classroom; one of the television stations did its own feature soon afterward; newspapers across the metropolitan region and Grand Rapids have been publishing stories about Nahanni's visits to schools. DNR said nothing about it.

The incident of Caesar and the four-year-old girl occurred early in February 1978. A movie camera at the Lutheran School for the Deaf recorded the incident, and the film wound up on the television news.

At this point, the DNR swung into action.



grounding Caesar and Nahanni simultaneously under laws and rules that had been on the books for years.

One may fairly ask: If exhibiting Nahanni and Caesar was illegal to begin with, why didn't DNR track down immediately instead of biding its sweet time until a child was hurt?

I'VE MET Nahanni and had no qualms about giving her a belly rub. I haven't met Caesar, but I would have no qualms about greeting him.

I'd have to agree it would be unwise, however, to let these animals come in contact with children under the age of 15; 7 or with nervous or handicapped children.

Even if a predatory animal catches hold of a child in the gentlest way, it could do harm, even unintentionally, especially if the adults panic and try to pull the child away, which is what happened with Caesar and in the New Jersey wolf incident.

Wolves, moreover, pick out weak or diseased prey to kill. It would be most inadvisable, therefore, to expose a handicapped child to a predator.

It's regrettable that men, women and children will no longer be able to pet Nahanni and Caesar.

FOOTNOTE: The Fund for Animals Inc. (Cleveland Amory's outfit) is collecting petition signatures to make the wolf "our national mammal." I neither endorse nor oppose the campaign, but if you care to take part yourself, write to: Doris Dixon, 2841 Colony Road, Ann Arbor MI. 48104.