

editorial opinion

Discontent threatens Farmington's future

Trouble with a capital "T" is brewing in the Farmington business community, the results of which will have an effect on the future of all residents.

The discontent was most dramatically demonstrated recently when Lawrence Mayer, florist shop owner, resigned from the Historical Commission in protest of tax assessment increases to the historical district.

Both homeowners and businessmen are being socked with higher taxes because government is requiring more and more bucks to provide services. At the same time, local governments are striving to improve community shopping areas to bring in more shoppers and businesses.

The situation has led to a vicious circle with everyone the loser.

The Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce is fighting to keep up its membership rolls, yet businesses are either refusing to join or letting their memberships lapse.

The City of Farmington has established a Downtown Development Authority, and while city polls are hopeful that its establishment will spawn cooperation, officials remain cautious.

Farmington City Mgr. Bob Deadman said it best:

"We've received very little input from the business community and that's been historically true here."

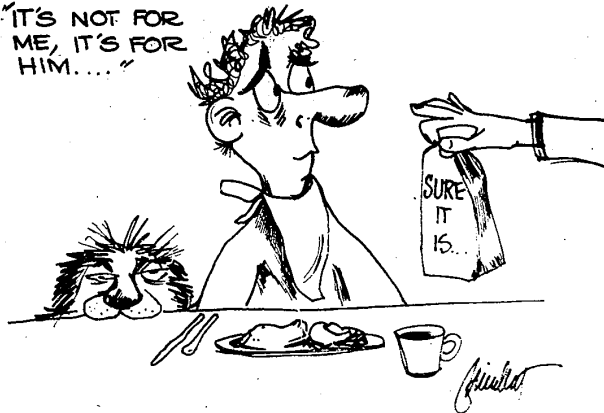


The Farmington-Farmington Hills area is at a crucial developmental stage. While other surrounding cities are faced with business booms such as the Twelve Oaks Shopping Mall in Novi, this area is being passed by.

COOPERATION IS THE ONLY way the twin cities will remain a desirable community in which to live. Pointing fingers and withdrawing only will aid in fostering harmful attitudes.

A big problem is that groups of businessmen and homeowners have their own particular views on a matter and don't take the extra step to find out what problems the other guy is facing and how they can best aid in alleviating that problem. It's about time these factions got together and faced the challenges.

IT'S NOT FOR ME, IT'S FOR HIM....



No coins, wrong line — life can be uncomfortable

Life has many uncomfortable moments, some of which we create ourselves.

Such as using the restroom at a gas station when you don't buy gas and you try to sneak in and sneak out.

Or when you are at a very fancy restaurant and use the restroom facilities and have no change in your purse or pocket, and notice a person standing there giving out hot towels with his or her hand extended outward palm up. You have to create an air of indifferent nearsightedness and go without washing your hands.

Or at the same restaurant when you park your car in the parking lot avoiding having to pay a quarter to the doorman, but you have to pass by him to get into the place.

How do you feel when you've sneaked into a club in which you don't belong?

WHAT ABOUT those sailors who want to replenish their ice supplies on their sailboat and sneak into a motel to take ice out of the automatic ice maker, continually looking over their shoulders to see if anyone is watching.

How do you feel when you use the "8 Items or Less" express lane in a supermarket when in fact you have more than eight items and know everyone is looking at you?

Or consider the student who goes to class unprepared and sits through the whole session hoping that the teacher will not call on him.

IT'S A LITTLE uncomfortable to park in a permit lot when you don't have a permit.

Or parking in a "No Parking" zone, hoping that you'll get back to the car before the police officer does.

Or not putting money in the meter, hoping that you'll be able to return before the policeman does.

What about standing in the grocery line mentally adding up all your purchases because you're not sure you have enough money in your pocket or purse, ready to pull something out if the amount goes over your resources.

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



Or not remembering the name of somebody you really knew well?

What if you're under 17, and go into a bar and are served and you wait for somebody to come and find out that you're not of age.

Or when you put on the brakes after you see a policeman and you have to wait that agonizing period to see if in fact he has caught you.

Or saying something nasty about a person and then realizing they are within earshot.

Or passing somebody in the right hand lane on an expressway, even though it is perfectly legal, you feel squeamish about it.

OR SPOTTING A RADAR car and turning one block earlier to avoid being caught.

What about going into an apartment complex to look around when there is a security guard and you drive through waving nonchalantly as if you lived there, hoping you won't be stopped and questioned?

Or when you're sitting around after dinner and drinks and the check comes and you know you don't have enough money in your pocket, and you hope somebody else will reach for the check.

Or asking for a doggie bag at a restaurant when you know darn well—and so does the waitress—that you're going to eat the food yourself.

What about when you're talking about a person and say to the people in your group "don't look now" and they all do look, and the person is looking your way.

It sure doesn't take big things to make life uncomfortable.

The anticipation of spring

The ground is still frozen solid, and the calendar says it's still several weeks until spring, but the signs are unmistakable.

The merchants lead the way, with boat and recreational vehicle shows, conjuring up visions of summer fun far more graphic than the visions of sugar plums of the yule season.

Where families spent languorous Sunday afternoons at home, they now take to the new subdivisions, examining new houses.

During the thaws, tulips close to the house push their noses up through the grey-brown soil, testing the air.

The youngster you knew from the high school you were reading about on our sports pages one or two springs ago is trying out for the Tigers or the Sox in spring training.

There are sad signs, too. The local kids are doing more joyriding now, and their car tracks ap-

pear with increasing frequency across neighborhood lawns. At stop streets, empty beer cans appear. You can tell kids did it because the cans are premium brands.

Opossums and skunks are coming out of hibernation after dark, but darkness still comes early, so many of the still lethargic creatures are being hit by cars.

Florida tans begin to show up in the office and at the luncheon club. Those tans are orange, not like the pinks and browns of Michigan tans of June and July.

But all of these are anticipations of spring. The real thing won't be here until the male redwing blackbirds start staking out their territories in the cattails and trilling to lure harems. That time is near at hand, and it's stimulating just to think about it.

Or, don't bet money on a subway

The flap over mass transit

To sum it up: It's not so much that suburban folks are against rapid rail transit. Rather, they're against spending a billion dollars on Detroit and only on Detroit.

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) has been getting the message in thunderous terms ever since its "Transportation Week" public hearings early in February.

Most folks were left numb by SEMTA's presentation of 14 different public transportation alternatives, but now the reaction is setting in. Consider:

• The Oakland County Road Commission, once one of the most unpopular bodies in Michigan history, is continuing to seduce some support for its light rail "plan," which is really just a slide show.

• Western Wayne County officials, usually indifferent to rapid transit talk, are lurching to life as they finally perceive that no subway, no light rail and no express bus service—no nothing—is being planned by SEMTA for the Schoolcraft Road corridor.

• There was spirited competition as the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments last week prepared to name a new member of the SEMTA board. The executive committee's nod went to Plymouth City Commissioner Beverly McAninch—an excellent choice, by the way, because she will articulate the dismay of the suburbs without the kind of divisive shenanigans the Oakland County Road Commission is pulling.

ONE MAJOR reason SEMTA is getting a lot of constructive criticism and flak is the plan it submitted to Washington last October when the friendly federal government promised \$900 million in urban mass transit funds.

That "preliminary proposal," as it's called, allocated at least 92 per cent of the \$1.1 billion program to Detroit and a pittance to the suburbs, according to my calculations—which no one has yet challenged.

Since I made those calculations, however, I found out two very, very interesting things about that "preliminary proposal."

First, the SEMTA board never voted on it, even



Tim Richard

though SEMTA's seal is on the cover. It seems that then-General Manager Clarence Genette told the SEMTA board he had to go to Washington to fight for federal funds, and when he was asked what plan he would offer, he replied that the staff would whip up something. (Genette no longer works for SEMTA.)

Second, I was in the audience recently when William Cilluffo, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young's right-hand man, was speaking to the Birmingham-Bloomfield League of Women Voters. It was funny: Cilluffo kept referring to the mass transit plan as "our" plan—"our" meaning the City of Detroit's. No wonder that "preliminary proposal" allocated 92 per cent of SEMTA's projected funds inside Detroit's city limits!

SEMTA BOARD members are studying mind-boggling computer reports of the 14 rapid transit alternatives.

The heavy rail (with subway) shown in Detroit's "preliminary proposal" is one of those alternatives. Besides heavy rail, SEMTA is considering light rail (a modern version of the streetcar), express bus (modern mover kinds of road) stock.

Frankly, some SEMTA board members are shocked at the staggering amounts of money it will take to build even a fraction of the rapid rail transit lines that are contemplated.

The point is that when SEMTA folks call that heavy rail plan a "preliminary proposal," they mean it. Their own looks at the figures, coupled with suburban indignation at the Detroit-only ideas, lead to doubt they will approve Mayor Young's dream of a subway.

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Execution on TV?

Death—and a fast fadeout

Capital punishment, this time without the frenzied excesses of the Gary Gilmore case, is back in the local news. Last week Michigan Republicans at their state convention voted strongly in favor of a proposal to make capital punishment an optional sentence for murder.

It's a subject which touches families in the suburbs directly. As George Stone of Farmington Hills noted in the floor debate, the executive board of the Republican 17th District Congressional organization has four families which have been directly touched by murder within the past year or two.

The vote at the convention was 572 to 257 in favor of the proposal, which would go on the ballot in 1978 if the state legislature approves. At present, Michigan has a constitutional bar against the death penalty.

THE CASE for capital punishment, of course, is that it would tend to deter murder.

Whether it would or would not be arguable, but the day before yesterday an item from the Associated Press added a new angle. A convicted murderer of a policeman who is in jail in New York has asked that if he is to be executed it be televised. "If society wants to condemn me to death, I'd love to have the whole thing on television, especially using the barbaric electric chair."

His argument is that the horror of the actual event of an execution, if televised, would be a much greater deterrent against murder than the present sanitized news coverage. Court rules prohibit live coverage of executions on the grounds that the act is too horrible for public consumption.

Back in the 18th and 19th centuries, they had public hangings in London and Paris, and even today the new regime in Cambodia paraded the heads of executed political enemies around to encourage cooperation from the population.

It's an interesting idea, although I really don't have the guts or bad taste to advocate it. Being a newsman who has covered a few murders myself, I can assure all concerned that merely the sight of a corpse is disturbing enough, without having

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



to watch the actual event of somebody dying.

THE IDEA did get me to musing, though, about the problem of television violence. I don't know how many of the action shows you've watched lately, but I caught a couple on Monday and was astonished and outraged at the amount of violence pouring through the tube.

The argument against violence on TV is that it induces people, especially impressionable children, to think that it's OK behavior to act out their anger in violent ways.

I noticed one thing. Even with all the shootings and stabbings and rapings you see on TV, you never see the actual effects of such violence. The bad guy gets a load of buckshot in the face, and you see the face just begin to dissolve—never anything more. One of the murders I covered years ago involved a man who had been shot in the face, and the sight of that head so mangled has stayed in my shocked mind's eye ever since.

If any kind of argument against violence is needed (and I do not believe it really is), it is that the consequences of the act are so horrible as to discourage it in the first place.

In a way, I suspect that all the violence on TV with the fast fadeouts (supposedly in the name of good taste) simply encourages impressionable viewers that violence has no real consequence in horror.

I don't advocate showing the gruesome after-effects of violence on TV, just as I don't support the idea of showing executions on TV. But I do think that in what ought to be a national debate on the effects of violence on TV, the subtle effects of the fast fadeout ought to be kept in mind.