

editorial opinion

Silver triangle will grow despite Franklin Village

The big question in Southfield tonight will be whether or not city council will act on plans for the much maligned Park LaSalle, proposed for the valuable "Silver Triangle."

Franklin Village residents are in court in an attempt to stave off the public hearing and further delay development of the high-rise complex they claim will destroy their way of life.

Concerned Citizens of Franklin are asking the court to order that the 30-member group be granted the right to be directly involved in all decision-making processes involving Park LaSalle.

It seems unlikely a judge would allow residents and officials from another community to sit around the Southfield City Council table or act as ex-officio city planning commissioners. But nothing short of this governmental status would please dissidents from Franklin Village.

The conflict is only one of a continuing battle over the issue of what constitutes an acceptable limit of urban growth. Franklin homeowners consider Southfield developers "Samsons," tugging at the pillars of civilization while city fathers with tax dollar signs in their eyes lend support.

CONCERNED Citizens of Franklin claim Park LaSalle plans are too massive for Southfield officials to measure. The group is more than willing

to cooperate in an environmental impact study of the complex.

The offer of cooperation is too little and too late. About a decade ago, Franklin was asked to participate with Southfield in petitioning for a sewer to serve single-family residents. The water table was high, causing severe problems. But Franklin declined to cooperate.

In 1970, other communities were carrying Franklin by paying its share for sewers. The village's participation was needed to petition for an inter-community storm drain in the "Silver Triangle." But again Franklin turned thumbs down.

In 1972, Oakland County joined Southfield in petitioning for the improvement. And so the controversial Perlick Drain was expected to become reality. But the drain has been stymied by Franklin and Southfield groups, and retention basins are being considered.

The rustic community of Franklin thwarted previous development threats posed by the now-defunct plans to extend Northwestern Highway at the village's southwestern border.

Borders are drawn by those who seek a nesting place and can afford it. But progress is reality, and cities grow while some people stand still and alone and fight development.



Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr

Some applause please

When public officials and residents unite in a laudable cause, they deserve thanks—lots of it.

Dr. Fred Ignavitch, consulting chairman to the Task Force on School Organizational Study (SOS) presented the group's final report last week. In doing so, he praised the school district for its visionary planning.

Let's hear a second on that one. Other districts are slashing programs and staff to stay above water financially.

Surrounding districts were caught with their pants down when it comes to declining enrollment. It seems educators everywhere failed to realize the implications of fewer births and smaller enrollments, Ignavitch says.

Farmington, to its credit, escaped the tunnel-vision syndrome endemic to many other districts. Two years ago the Task Force on Declining Enrollment was formed to study the long-range effects of fewer pupils. On that group's recommendation last January, the SOS Task Force was appointed.

Now after a year of study, including enrollment projections, building use in the 1980's, and considerable leg work, the task force has recommended middle schools for Farmington.

THERE'S nothing particularly new or radical about middle schools. The typical middle school comprises students from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Curriculum is geared to the students, as opposed to secondary approach in which students face a pre-set program.

The mini high school pattern of junior highs is scrapped in favor of a more individualized approach.

Many educators support the middle school philosophy, and the educational benefits seem clear.

However, in terms of declining enrollment, the fiscal benefits are important as well. Expensive high schools and junior highs don't go begging for students, since ninth graders are moved to high schools and sixth graders moved to junior highs.

Faced with declining enrollment, more schools will be closed in Farmington's future. If the board adopts a middle school approach, elementary schools will be the closing target in the 1980's.

Many parents may oppose that approach. Farmington residents particularly appear to be devoted to neighborhood schools.

BUT that concept is expensive, much too expensive in light of the district's fiscal future.

You can keep neighborhood schools at a price—the narrowing of curriculums in the upper grades. The time has passed, if it ever was exploited seriously, when a few students could substantiate an expensive program.

As the middle school alternative is weighed in the coming months, there's something important for students, staff and parents to keep in mind: Advance planning such as this district has seen in the task forces' work is priceless.

Political, fiscal, and educational reactions pale when compared to decisions based on insight and planning.

Action, as opposed to reaction, provides for careful decisions made without haste.

The Farmington School District community may survive the throes of declining enrollment with a sound educational system. And for that possibility—in the light of problems faced by neighboring districts—the task forces, administration, faculty, and board can take a bow.

You deserve our thanks.

Editor's Notebook

The town that's forgettable

By W. MICHAEL MILLER

It's best known as the town that time forgot, but in most circles in Southfield, it is known as the town that is forgettable.

Of course, we're talking about Franklin Village, and don't get me wrong—it would probably be a nice place to live, as long as the neighbors would not always be offering up warnings of the encroaching menace of Southfield.

The whole approach of the little villagers in the little town that time easily forgets toward the Park LaSalle project is little different than the crusading approach the U.S. took 20 years ago to stopping communism in our backyard—in Vietnam.

Granted there are a few more miles between San Francisco and Saigon than there are between the Cider Mill and the American Center, but it's really pretty much the same principle—do unto your neighbor, before he does unto you.

True, it is rather a narrow interpretation of the golden rule, but as it brought the U.S. "peace with honor" earlier this decade, it will probably bring some kind of odious laurels upon the more "concerned" Franklinites who are trying to stop the construction of Park LaSalle in Southfield.

These pesky villagers are rising up, shaking their pitchforks and shovels and claiming that Park LaSalle, a good half-mile from the Franklin Village limits, will sour their peaceful way of life.

THIS WOULD all be fine and good, but Park LaSalle is not being built in Franklin, it is being built in Southfield. So really, it is a case of the people of Franklin not being satisfied with the size of their village and wanting to extend the borders to the south by half a mile.

Southfield City Council will most likely see this avaricious landgrabbing attempt for what it is and give its blessing to the LaSalle project.

Franklinites should face the fact that they probably would have had more luck trying to annex Vietnam than Southfield.

Speaking of narrow-mindedness, there's nothing like assessments and revelations of home property in Southfield, coupled with the unfortunately published rumor that Black Muslims are moving to Southfield, to bring the bigots out of the woodwork.

They were at the assessment review hearings asking why their property was valued higher when blacks were moving into Southfield.

A question like that hopefully doesn't



W. MICHAEL MILLER

indicate the general level of intelligence of Jews and gentiles in Southfield, but it certainly makes one wonder if truly we are living in the "land of milk and honey."

And the hearings weren't the only forum for that sort of unenlightened caterwauling last week. There were endless calls at Southfield City Hall and the Department of Human Resources, not to mention the Southfield Eccentric, in which people bared the very souls of their ignorance and prejudice.

MANY OF THEM began with the telling qualifier: "Now, I don't want to get into color, but..."

Certainly, Southfielders do not deserve erroneous reporting in their local newspaper. But neither do the hardworking, dedicated and committed homeowners in Southfield deserve the reactionary vitriol that characterized the feelings of many homeowners last week when they were given the impression that Black Muslims were moving to Southfield.

Which brings us to 1984 and mass

chaos.

This report comes from State Rep. Joseph Forbes (D-Southfield, Oak Park).

"Our nation is turning towards a cashless society, moving away from such 'paper transfers' as cash and checks and towards the electronic transfer of funds.

"Electronic fund transfers (EFT) are already with us. Senior citizens can now have their social security checks deposited directly into their bank accounts. Many employers offer direct payroll deposits. Many banks and credit unions have 24-hour electronic 'tellers' that accept or disburse funds or transfer funds from one account to another.

"Some utilities and insurance companies will make arrangements for direct payment of monthly bills and premiums from a checking account, without the need to actually write a check.

"In the future, EFT will enable consumers to make direct payments to retailers from checking accounts. Instead of paying cash, writing a check or using a credit card, the customer will use a 'debit card' that will allow the immediate electronic transfer of funds from the customer's account to the retailer's account.

"THERE ARE many advantages to EFT, but also the potential of major abuses, such as electronic theft, or funds through stolen debit cards, dishonest financial institution employees or a mistake by a computer programmer. There is also the danger of invasion of privacy, and the inconvenience of competing EFT systems, where terminals in stores might accept debit cards from only one financial institution."

Forbes and enough of his cohorts in the state house recently passed a bill to put controls on EFT.

As a footnote to Forbes' discussion of a cashless computerized money society, here are a few quotes from Carl Stoddard's story last month on power blackouts and computers (keep in mind that energy is an ever-lessening natural resource):

"John Gordon, manager of data processing at Lawrence Institute of Technology—"It (a blackout) is going to be disastrous."

"A Bendix Corp. spokesman—"Permanent damage could result (from a power blackout) and memories would have to be replaced."

What does it all mean? Only that when electronic money is a reality, it will be most advantageous to spend oneself silly and pray for a power blackout.

Tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

UFO flies through town

Once in a while, the police logs can lead to something cheerier than robbery or whatever mayhem comes into the typical bedroom community. (That is why the Hills is called Sleepy Hollow is some circles, isn't it?)

Occasionally, the local gendarmes will come into contact with a situation that doesn't make the rest of us shake our heads and remember the good old days when you could leave the back door open.

Such an event was recently recorded with the Farmington police. A resident was driving past Flanders Elementary School, presumably minding his own business, when he noticed two large red spotlights about 100 feet above the school. They were traveling in a zig-zag pattern.

He stopped his car to watch the two lights soundlessly travel southwest and over the school.

FIVE minutes passed before they were out of sight.

The incident, at the beginning of the week, was one of a rash of UFO sightings that were reported to Selfridge Air Force and the Center for UFO Studies.

Because Selfridge, along with the rest of the Air Force, has disassociated itself from investigating unidentified flying objects, their public relations department could do little more than listen to the stories.

But the report that finally made it on the log of the FPD was reported to the Center for UFO Stud-

ies, which admits that 90 per cent of the sightings reported can be attributed to natural phenomena.

Stars, comets, meteors, airplanes and weather balloons are common causes for UFO reports, according to Mrs. Estelle Postol, the Center's administrator.

Even the Center staff is skeptical of some of the reports. If a detailed report comes in, an investigator who is near the location is notified.

"If there are other witnesses, and we can get specific information as to where it was seen, we can determine what we're looking for," she explained.

Vague reports meet up with the circular file.

BUSINESS HAS picked up for the Center since the film, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" was released.

"We've received some very old reports from many years back," Mrs. Postol said. "Some from the 1900s."

In years when a science-fiction movie isn't good box office, the Center waits patiently for its busy month, July.

Personally, I'm more than tempted to paraphrase Scrooge and say that it's probably something bad in the barbecue sauce that's causing all those sightings.

But I'm also noticing our insistence on finding someone else besides ourselves in the universe.

from our readers

Media overemphasizes violence

Editor: I must take great issue with your sensational and slanted headline of March 6 regarding the Channel 56 controversy.

The construction of that headline, beginning with "Jews" (rather than the preferred "Jewish"), followed by three negative terms—including the incorrect construction "boycott against"—creates the erroneous impression that Jewish organizations have somehow transgressed.

That is not the case. Neither is there a boycott.

As an aside, if Jewish support of Channel 56 is so important, why can't

Mr. Christianson issue a simple apology?

At any rate, the frightening element in the entire matter is that just as your slanted and sensational headline belies the material in your story, your story about a boycott or lack thereof masks the real issue. If it were only a matter of semantics in a headline or apologies and ill-feelings, the matter indeed would be a simple one.

But the real issue is whether or not subversives who preach the violent overthrow of the United States, psychopaths who invoke the horrors of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, and the millions tortured and slaughtered in Europe during World War II have access to the media and the constitutional guarantees of free speech.

IF WE are to survive, I think that the answer is an emphatic "no."

Freedom of speech does not include the right to shout "fire" in a crowded theater, to make obscene phone calls or to incite to violence. Those who preach the Nazi party line do just that. The media do us a great disservice when they obscure the real issues with inflammatory headlines that lay false trails.

Channel 56 will survive a few supporters, more or less. Mr. Christianson, and the community, will survive a few apologies, more or less.

Can our country survive the excessive and slanted exposure the media currently give violence?

DAN GREENBERG, Farmington Hills

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