

editorial opinion

Behind-scenes battle over Majoros' status must come to an end

Inertia has set in at Farmington Hills City Hall. A behind-the-scenes battle among Hills council members about the future status of City Mgr. George Majoros has taken precedence over city business—a situation that should come to an end.

Either the council should publicly support Majoros or demand his resignation. It's time for the council to put political alliances and considerations aside, and put the welfare of the city up front where it belongs.

In a 2½-hour closed session last week, council members debated Majoros' merits and demerits. It's no secret that his job has been offered to other public administrators. City Hall is abuzz with rumors and speculation as to Majoros' position with the council, while staff members walk a tight-rope to avoid taking sides in the issue.

The tense situation is fair to neither Majoros nor the city, since discussions about his tenure have shoved aside the real concerns and questions facing the city. The question before the council now is whether Majoros, regardless of his merits or demerits, can be effective in his leadership role in the currently unstable atmosphere.

IT'S THE council's job to make sure the city manager is an effective leader. There is no question that Majoros has displayed talent as a city manager in his five-year tenure since the city's incorporation.

Few residents would quibble with the contention that the city under his leadership has improved

services to the former township residents. The question is whether his personal problems with the council at this juncture can be resolved to a satisfactory conclusion.

In our opinion, Majoros has placed his own job security before the city's business at this point in his career.

This was evidenced most recently during a council meeting in which Majoros chose to withhold financial information from the council until a motion had been made by Councilwoman Joanne Smith regarding a special assessment district in Lincolnshire subdivision.

Mrs. Smith, who has been forthright in her desire to remove Majoros from his position, and other council members were surprised to discover that a recommendation made by one staff member could not be financed as the council assumed. But it's the job of the city manager to advise the council of all the known ramifications of any action.

Majoros did know of the financial problems involved in the council's decision. For whatever reason, he chose to withhold that knowledge until Mrs. Smith made a motion on the subject. With his revelation of the financial implications, he put Mrs. Smith as well as the rest of the council out on a limb at a public meeting.

IF MAJOROS' leadership is questionable, the council must take up the matter immediately.

It's definitely time to get out from behind closed doors and whispered telephone calls and make a decision.



Housing industry should take some high tax blame

Most things in the American economy are inflationary, but some are more inflationary than others.

One of the most inflationary is housing. And when you get to the bottom line, the housing industry is as much responsible for the "tax revolt" in Michigan as the free-spending bureaucrats.

These conclusions leaped out at me recently as I heard a talk by Ned S. Hubbell, who heads a Michigan counseling firm devoted to educational public relations and opinion research.

Hubbell gives a speech he calls "A Profound Transformation." He talks and shows slides about the decline in births, the growth in the number of older folks, the changes in family size and housing.

"ANOTHER FACTOR—the price of homes—will tend to support increased apartment-style living and the trend to smaller families," he says.

"The median price for new homes went up from \$23,000 to \$45,000 between 1970 and 1975—a 95 per cent increase—and is projected to reach \$70,000 in the 1980s.

"During these same years that home costs rose 95 per cent, median income went up just 40 per cent. It is estimated that only one-fourth of American families can afford a median price new home.

Interestingly, many families who are buying homes report they are planning smaller families in order to meet these costs."

So says Ned Hubbell, working with national figures.

Closer to home, I can recall reports to the Economic Club of Detroit during the oil crisis recession that showed 47 per cent unemployment in the building trades in southeast Michigan.

At the same time, prices continued to soar 15 per cent annually. The industry, the tradesmen and the building suppliers are all working together to send housing costs up faster than the rate of inflation in the rest of the economy. If it costs the workers jobs, if it costs the builders sales, it makes no difference.



Tim Richard

Housing costs are continuing to outpace the rest of the economy.

IN THE EARLY '60s, school people complained constantly that their costs were rising faster than property tax revenues, which were tied to stagnant assessments.

A rural township supervisor once told me he found a rolled-up paper in an obscure drawer that turned out to be the 1880 assessment roll. He picked out a certain farm, looked up the 1880 assessment and compared it to the 1960 assessment. It hadn't changed!

So in the early 1960s, the school folks had a good argument for tying school revenue to something more dynamic than stagnant assessments.

The new Michigan constitution in 1964 was to correct this. All assessments were to be pegged at 50 per cent of true market value, which meant that assessments—and therefore revenue—would rise with inflation.

Unfortunately, inflation in the construction industry took hold at almost exactly the same time. As new housing prices soared faster than our paychecks, they dragged prices of existing housing up with them. And our tax assessments rose with them.

If you've heard the Dick Headlee and Robert Tisch pitches, you've heard them rant about "bureaucrats" spending the dough faster than we can earn it. That's political talk. The truth is that the construction industry, the building trades and the materials suppliers had a hand in it.

Picture-book golfer

Dad never pushed Nancy

If you ever had watched a Tom Mix movie, you'd know that the best route for a cattle driver from Texas to Colorado back when the six-shooter was king was by way of the Goodnight-Loving trail. It meant suffering the burning sun of Carlsbad and eating dust north through Santa Fe and on to Durango, but somehow the job got done.

Any guy with smarts in later years would have tarried in the Pecos Valley of New Mexico at the settlement of Roswell, the seat of Chaves County. Your assumption is going to be that he would ask for lessons in roping and other cowboy skills, but you're wrong.

If your name were Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer and you missed the cut in the national PGA tournament during the same week when a 21-year-old senorita from Roswell was winning the European women's open, you would ask for golf lessons from Domingo Lopez.

Only because I might get there before you, you would find him whacking the dings out of my car at the East Second Street Body & Fender Shop, which he owns. Between whacks we would be out back punching 2-iron shots off the hardpan.

Nancy Marie Lopez says of her father, recalling when tagged along with mom and pop to the Roswell golf course age of eight, "Daddy just put the ball on the ground and told me to hit it into the hole way down there."

Few pupils in any subject on any campus anywhere in the world ever have taken an instructor so literally.

DOMINGO LOPEZ was a golf nut even before he moved to Roswell. His prior home had been in Torrance, Calif., just a short extension of an oil refinery pipeline from my town of Long Beach, and it was in Torrance that Nancy was born Jan. 6, 1957. At the time, her dad was a three-handicapper and one of southern California's better amateur players.

Neither Domingo nor wife Marina, who died last year, ever forced golf upon their flashing-eyed beauty of a daughter. Her natural instinct for the sport simply came to the fore as easily as perspiration surfaces through the pores.

First thing one knew, she had grown into a college beauty and owned the national collegiate women's championship while at the University of Tulsa.

But behind this success was a philosophy of her paternal tutor which Nancy puts in these words:

"He never pushed me. He would encourage me to do better, but he would never get mad at me when I didn't. He'd say, 'It makes no difference how you play. We'll always love you.'"

through
bifocals



Today, my own golf-minded daughter, 17, is playing her final round in the Southern Michigan Junior Amateur tournament over Ann Arbor's trying 6,900-yard Leslie Park course. I weep to think I don't have the wisdom of a Domingo Lopez and never have spoken such words myself.

THE LOPEZ LASS will be going after her ninth tourney title in a year's time next week when she tees it up in the Lady Stroh's Open at the Dearborn Country Club. If you need the element of non-jock local importance to whet your appetite, it's in the fact that the charitable beneficiary of the gate receipts will be our own Leader Dog School for the Blind at Rochester.

Betting one player against 125 others is asinine, and there's no prediction here that Senorita Lopez will come home the winner. The field exudes class. The big names of the tour all will be there—Stacy, Baugh, Stephenson, Rankin et al.

But if you want to watch one gal who attacks a golf course with audacity, who gives every putt an even chance, who has a picture-book swing, and yet who has the natural rapport with an audience of a Lee Trevino, then catch a few holes of Lopez in action.

Out in Roswell, the natives tell tall tales of "Pecos Bill," a legendary folklore character said to have been raised by coyotes. He was thought to have been one of them until folks found out he had no tail.

As a cowboy, Pecos Bill roped and saddled a mountain lion and never was thrown until he rode a Kansas cyclone.

When Nancy gets home, the tales of her accomplishments all will be tall but they will be measurable in LPGA statistics and bank accounts. She's far and away the top candidate as 1978's sports-person of the year.

'Reforms' the voters want

Congress and the state legislatures fiddle around with "reforms" every time they go into session.

There are tax reforms, lobbying reforms, welfare reforms and the like. Seldom are they really reforms—merely shifting of financial responsibility from a greater number of voters to a lesser number of voters to please the most number of voters.

George Gallup, in his polling, has come up with the six real political reforms that most Americans want. Because they affect the people who would have to pass them, these reforms have been very slow in being enacted.

THREE REFORMS revolve around how we elect our president:

- Seventy-five per cent of the public favors doing away with the Electoral College by amending the U.S. Constitution to provide for direct popular election of the president. Such a bill passed the House of Representatives in 1969 but was filibustered to death. The present system allows a person with fewer popular votes than his opponent to be elected president.

- Sixty-eight per cent of voters would like a nationwide primary to be held on the same day in all 50 states so that voters could nominate presidential candidates for their parties. This would end nomination by political conventions and confusion with the many state primaries held over a six-month period.

- Sixty-eight per cent would like to shorten the campaign season, which now extends from the first primaries in January to the general election in November, exhausting the candidates, boring the public and costing a lot of money. The public favors moving election day to September.

THREE OTHER major political reforms the public would like to see are: eliminating the tenure of representatives in Congress to a maximum of 12 years (60 per cent in favor); having the government provide a fixed amount of money for congressional campaigns with contributions from all other sources prohibited, (the ban to include use of the candidates' own funds (57 per cent); and allowing Americans to initiate federal legislation

Eccentricities



by HENRY M. HAGAN, JR.

when a group equal to three per cent of the number who voted in the last presidential election signs a petition requesting such a referendum (57 per cent).

The restriction on the length of time a congressman can serve would again make him a citizen representative instead of allowing him to look at it as a job and a way of making a living.

It would allow more able people a chance to serve.

It also would have a tendency to lower the age of Congress and make it perhaps more in tune with the will of the people.

AS FOR GOVERNMENT-supplied funds for congressional campaigns, a candidate must either be wealthy or look for contributions from those seeking political favors under the present system. If the government supplied and limited the funds spent, no one would have an undue financial advantage in an election, less would be spent, and possibly the electorate will pick the best qualified person.

The last political reform, allowing for public initiation of federal laws, would allow the people to make law if their desires were bottled up in Congress for political reasons.

Had this been law, Gallup says, 65 per cent of the voters would have abolished mandatory school busing to achieve racial balance, and 57 per cent would have passed the Equal Rights Amendment (including more men than women), and 77 per cent would have approved tougher gun controls.

All of these reforms, approved by a majority of the voting public, would make us a purer democracy. However, the congressmen who would lose some power would have to approve them.

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