

Opinion

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BAF

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Leadership is wanting

Guess we'll never see the end of political courage in this town. The gang up at the corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake want you to pass a millage for 'em.

Imagine, after all the hot air blowing around city hall about councilmembers being elected to make decisions, the august body of legislators follows the lead of "Mr. Let the Voters Decide" — that is, after they berated the guy for years on end about his belief.

Now I'm the last person in the world to promote the aims of Councilman Donn Wolf. But you gotta give the guy credit. He stuck to his guns and he won the day on the tax issue.

Oh sure, you'll hear a lot of excuses about why a charter amendment is needed to raise your tax limitation from 10 mills to 11.5. And yes, you've been left with little choice. Anyone who cares about the future of Farmington Hills will vote in favor. Responsible legislators would have raised the millage years ago.

But the real issue is that city council has the power to levy up to two more mills for running this city but lacks the courage to use that power.

THE CITY charter mandates that council use its judgment on whether to levy up to 10 mills. But this council's judgment certainly is suspect.

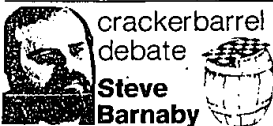
Mayor Charlie Williams loves to brag about how council has been frugal in levying less than the entire 10 mills. But he has supported a move which would allow him and his cronies to spend even more than that.

The contradictions surrounding this decision are mindboggling.

This is the council which argued for weeks over two-thirds of a mill but lacked the political courage to make the really important decision on this community's future.

One of the wisest citizens of the republic recently remarked that the Farmington Hills leadership stands a good chance of bearing the eternal curse of future generations.

Long on political expediency and short



on long-range planning. Farmington Hills City Council has been economically cheating its children and grandchildren from the get go — well since incorporation, anyway.

Even before cityhood, political leaders wrestled with a population which was far more conservative than the leadership.

PRECURSORS OF things to come around the state, Farmington Township residents were arguing about pretty taxes long before we heard a peep out of Richard Headlee and Robert Tisch.

Just to pass the charter, the commission was forced to compromise on a 10-mill limit — much too low for any growing city to operate on.

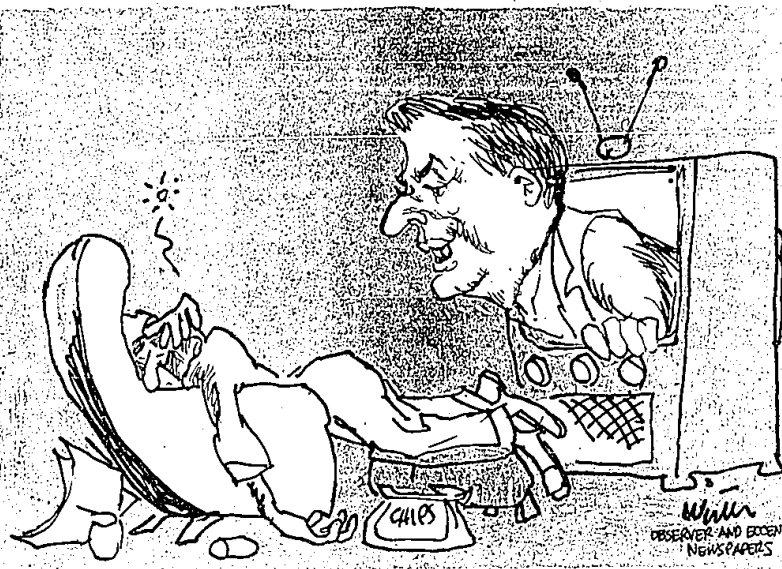
Despite Williams' notion, the full 10 mills should have been levied years ago and the city wouldn't be so far behind. More could have been done with cheaper dollars.

Now the city has a shopping list of capital improvements — things that should have been done years ago — and not enough money to do them.

The list includes: drains, sidewalks, police station, park development and road improvement.

And time is of the essence in completing these projects. Unlike earlier days when the city was sparsely populated, today the city is in desperate need of the projects and services on the capital-improvement list.

Since the council has been reluctant to do the job, it really is up to the residents to save their community for future generations.



Much ado about not much

SAN FRANCISCO — Talk about an elephant giving birth to a gnat, and you have this week's Democratic National Convention.

It's the 1984 Republican National Convention. Ditto 1976 and 1980 national conventions.

This is not to belittle the august nominees. Rather, it is to suggest that the parties don't need a week to do a half-day's work.

CONSIDER THE sheer size of this week's conclave in San Francisco — something like 4,000 delegates. That is little more than the number of delegates who will attend the Michigan Democratic State Convention in Detroit next month.

But the Michigan Democratic State Convention will adopt a platform and nominate candidates for the state Supreme Court and eight educational posts — 10 in all. Two years ago they also nominated candidates for lieutenant governor, secretary of state and attorney general — a platform and a total of 13 candidates. And the state convention did it all in two days.

Their inefficient national convention, however, is eating up four days to nominate two candidates and adopt a platform. At this writing, the result is a foregone conclusion.



Tim Richard

Republicans will send 3,000 delegates to Dallas for a week to nominate two candidates, and again the result is a foregone conclusion. At the state level, however, the same number of delegates will pick 10 candidates on a Friday night and a Saturday in early September, but the process will be exciting, and the results in doubt.

UNTIL THE 1950s, national conventions were truly deliberative affairs, with vote-trading and job-promising. It often took a full week to do the work.

No more. Today primaries, computer tallies and the high cost of running a campaign assure the field will be pared down to one no later than the end of June.

Why, then, hold a weeklong convention to do the job a weekend convention could handle?

In this high-tech age, there's no need even to bring 3,000 or 4,000 delegates, 12,000-15,000 newsmen plus assorted

hangers-on and lobbyists together at a cost of \$60 million (the hotel where the Michigan delegation is staying costs \$180 a night, advance payment mandatory; no refunds upon cancellation). Instead, delegates could go to their state capitals, hear nominating speeches by television, vote by pressing a button — and get it over in a single afternoon.

And they could forget the platform because, while it stirs a lot of debate, no one reads platforms one day after they're adopted. Anyway, the platform is not what the committees and delegates say it is; the platform is what the nominee's pollster, research staff and speech writer say it is.

WELL, YOU will answer, aren't conventions spectacular television shows?

Not any more. The parties would like them to be, and pander to TV crews in the most fawning way. They would like gavel-tossed, prime-time coverage of their orations, intelligent or indifferent. But they aren't getting it.

The networks are declining to be the conduits for propaganda and are cutting off the orators for floor interviews. The viewers are switching to sports and rerated cable movies, anyway.

We really ought to do away with this antiquated extravaganza.

Baseball weekend: It's all in the cards

Baseball fever is raging. But it's not all at the corner of Michigan and Trumbull. A different kind of fever can be experienced this weekend at the 15th Annual Sports Collectors Show at the Plymouth Hilton. It is better known as a baseball card convention.

If you've never been to one, you're missing something. Anyone with any interest in baseball will have a great time.

For a modest \$1 you will be admitted to the ballroom of the Plymouth Hilton. You will find dealers standing behind rows of tables with all their wares displayed. The Plymouth show is the largest held in the Middle West every year.

Dealers will be trading/selling much more than baseball cards. They will have uniforms, bats, balls, jerseys, magazines, programs, posters, bats and schedules.

SO WHY DOES someone get involved in sports memorabilia collecting?

Take Harold Bussey, an optometrist and president of the Southfield School Board. His conservative appearance belies his sports fanaticism.

Of his extensive baseball collection, he says, "It is my tranquility. It is my source of relaxation from pressure."

Bussey is going to take off work Friday and will arrive at the show at about 11 a.m. Twelve hours later he hopes to have some new bats, balls and uniforms to add to his collection.

"I enjoy talking to the dealers since I only get to see most of them once a year," he said.

Of the approximately 400 dealers who will be in Plymouth, Bussey said about 250 are doing it as a hobby. For the remainder, it's a full-time business.

"If it had come up to 65 percent of the dealers and said 'I don't have any money but I need a card, I need a bat and the card,'" he said. "Most of them are like me."

"I live for the day when I will receive a card and a dealer will say, 'I've got a Ty



Nick Sharkey

Cobb bat in my basement. Would you like to buy it?"

THE PLYMOUTH convention will be my third. I have a son who is an avid baseball card collector.

I must confess he doesn't have to do much arm twisting to talk me into taking him. I collected baseball cards about 30 years ago. Unlike most adults I never threw my cards away.

Baseball card collecting is very different today than when I was a kid. I used my cards extensively by playing imaginary games and memorizing every word on the back. I remember one game where I would flip my cards against a wall. Another boy would do the same. Whoever flipped his card on top of the other boy's would pick up all the cards.

Today it's more sophisticated. Baseball cards are considered an "investment." Books and magazines are published telling collectors the value of every card.

A valuable card must be in mint condition, meaning no dented corners nor writing on the back. No kid today would play games with his cards like I did. Kids today collect entire "sets," or every card put out in a year. They can buy a new set for \$15-25 by individual packs (15 cards for 30 cents now, 7 cards for 5 cents in my day).

I'm glad I collected cards in a more relaxed time. Some kids today talk like investment advisers: "I put my money in market certificates or baseball cards this weekend."

baseball cards has always been fun. That's why I'll be at the Plymouth Hilton this weekend.

... but wait until next time

DEMOCRATIC political conventions aren't what they used to be. Ever since the process of electing delegates was reformed after since primaries took over as the main mechanism for selecting candidates, the conventions have become boring affairs.

Where are the intrigues, the deals, the hastily formed coalitions of power brokers? Where are the bosses who commanded entire delegations and were courted by office seekers as if they were majestic potentates?

Where is the likes of Boss Richard Daly who kept presidential aspirants on pins and needles as he controlled the entire Illinois delegation with a few baleful stares? Where is the sinister Carmine De Sapio with his dark glasses injecting his Tammany Hall influence into major decisions?

CONVENTIONS used to be dominated by men, longtime political workers who knew the score and when to switch sides. The outcome was often in doubt. Now the Dem convention is half women and it seems like every other delegate is a teacher from somewhere. The pragmatists are losing ground to the idealists. The results are preordained.

In 1980, says a source, "Bribery and Chatterbox pointed out the major source of power in the convention. The 'expansions,' the maneuvering, the lesser political science was on even morning to night."



Bob Wisler

The conventions are now so boring that TV only bothers to cover a few hours at night. The candidates are known before the convention begins. Their lives have been detailed in every newspaper and magazine in the country.

And still the news organizations feel we should know more. The news people outnumber delegates almost three to one. Time on the convention floor is limited. The reporters have to scramble to even get near delegates. They end up interviewing each other and telling us what newspaper reporters think of San Francisco.

Conventions no longer serve the purpose of selecting candidates and forging platforms. They are held only to provide demonstrations. The party hopes that its staged demonstration will coalesce momentum behind the candidates, that party loyalists will feel compelled to work hard

mind-made-up TV viewers will not a television program or a candidate and the media they feed.

realizes innately the potential for staging its own demonstration within the major demonstration. We have had the spectacle of the anti-war demonstration at the convention in Chicago and now demonstrations of gays demanding a rightful place within the party spectrum.

The trends will continue. Perhaps the next Democratic convention will have more flash and even less substance. The future is in candidate selection by primaries. One super primary day could select the standard bearer of the future.

The winning presidential candidate will interview a select list of 100 VP candidates. The candidate will then announce another woman. There's no going back now.

Of course, there will be greater pressure on the part of gays for their rightful place and perhaps demonstrations by a coalition of minority groups — Hispanics, defrocked ministers, clerics for peace, etc.

There will be more TV cameras and reporters tromping over each other to interview delegates and even less success. Newspapers will report even more trivia about convention halls, telephone lines, hotel accommodations, problems encountered by themselves and other reporters.