

Opinion

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Spicer land

Work to keep its beauty

IT'S A prime piece of potential parkland with floristic and topographical diversity.

Nestled in a quiet residential zone along Farmington Road, the picturesque, 212-acre tract — commonly called the Spicer property — is both a wildlife refuge and a nature preserve. A tributary of the Rouge River traverses the property, which lies just north of the Farmington Community Center near Farmington Road and 10 Mile. How many other places can you find where trees were bent by the Indians to mark trails?

The new owner, the city of Farmington Hills, is in the midst of preparing a plan to develop the acreage into a public park. Early signs point to it remaining largely undeveloped. And that's exactly as it should be.

Fragile and pristine, the acreage is a nature lover's delight. It's rich in pastoral splendor.

ACQUIRED IN May from the family of the late Eleanor Spicer for \$2 million, the parcel was partially paid for by a Michigan Land Trust Fund grant.

Anyone even remotely familiar with Farmington Hills' heritage knows Eleanor Spicer, a hardy naturalist, would have clearly wanted the land to remain as virgin as practical.

Suggested uses have included a botanical garden, a youth sports field, an interpretive nature center, a picnic grove, a wilderness campsite, a community garden, an outdoor ice rink, a working farm, a playground, a senior center, a day camp, a toboggan run, and a network of snowshoeing, hiking, and jogging, including cross-country trails.

A final decision about the Spicer property's fate won't be made until the city completes revision of its master parks and recreation plan. But it's altogether fitting to keep the spotlight trained on passive, rather than active, uses.

SUCH RELATIVELY passive uses as an outdoor ice rink, interpretive/wilderness programs, a senior center and wood-chipped trails certainly seem appropriate.

A small picnic grove also would be appropriate — keeping in mind the idea is not to bring people in by the bustle. It's



This sign marks the entrance to the Spicer property.

hard to get a feeling for nature when rubbing elbows with countless others.

A miniature farm holds lots of promise. If developed in conjunction with the Farmington Public Schools, it could provide an invaluable dimension to educational enrichment. Maple sugaring and other low-key "harvest type" activities would seem a perfect complement.

There's no disputing the argument that Farmington Hills lacks sufficient sports fields and recreation facilities. But there's no place for, say, an indoor ice arena on one of the city's few remaining natural jewels.

If the community deems it appropriate, a soccer field should be limited to the flat acreage fronting Farmington Road. Only low-intensity uses should be allowed on the rolling, wooded land to the west.

WHY DOES the Spicer property have so much natural worth?

Because much of the natural character of Farmington Hills is giving way to subdivision, commercial and office development. This same change is occurring in communities bordering the city.

It just makes good sense to hang onto some of what attracted the Farmington area's pioneers. The 212 acres are a good representation of those features — the woods, the wildlife, the meadows, the marshes, the wildflowers, the Dutch elms, the stream.

It's truly an ecological gem.

— Bob Sklar

Learning CPR is worth the risks!

WHAT IS the world coming to when fear of a lawsuit outweighs saving a human life?

In an incident which rivals any horror story, a custodian was reprimanded recently for administering CPR to a customer who had collapsed in the Troy Post Office.

John Sheppard was admonished as William Geromette, superintendent of postal operations, cautioned other postal employees against trying to administer CPR. If they aren't certified to do so, Sheppard isn't certified, although he served as a medic in the Army.

Geromette said he feared for the safety of the victim — as well as for the liability of the person administering CPR and the post office.

"What I was trying to tell the individual was, look, I know your heart is in the right place, but, regardless, people being people, I will take one to the cleaners (court), and I'll be paying for the rest of my life," Geromette said when questioned about the incident.

IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE to be cynical about lawsuits — anyone can sue anyone — and many do these days. But no matter how you disguise it, the fact of the matter is that Geromette and others who think like him are putting dollars before human life.

Should Sheppard have stood by and gawped as others in the post office did? The man might have died. Sheppard said he was able to restore the man's breathing.

Have we become so calloused as to advocate walking away from a real emergency rather than risk being sued?

There should be no question — and not a

moment's hesitation — when a person collapses before your very eyes. And there's no reason not to be certified at administering CPR.

Unfortunately, it often takes an emergency — or fear of one — to spur someone to sign up for a CPR class. Yet, the time committed — about three hours — is so minimal compared to the potential for saving a human life.

IT TOOK a near-crisis to get me into a CPR class, where they also teach how to help a person who is choking. Two friends and I were sitting in a crowded covey island when a woman started to choke. A deadly silence fell upon the place, and I still remember being frozen in my seat. My friend and one other person in the restaurant sprang into action.

I'll probably never forget that woman's look of gratitude and the tears running down her face. And I'll always remember how the rest of us in the restaurant felt so uncomfortable we couldn't look at each other.

Imagine how it would haunt you all the days of your life if you stood by and watched a friend, relative or even a stranger die because you were too inept or too scared to help. How could you live with yourself if you let a human life go because you feared being sued?

Everyone of us should be ready to act. And that means taking a CPR class. There's no excuse not to. The class is free. They are scheduled almost anytime of day or night — and they can be arranged at businesses or for any large group.

Call your local fire department for details. Once you've taken a class, officials recommend you take a refresher every few years. That reminds me: I'm overdue for my refresher course.

— Kathleen Moran



Give prisons some purpose

NEWSROOM TALK can be enlightening.

"You should've seen that place," said the photographer, waving his hands in the air.

"You wouldn't have wanted to spend the night in that place."

That place: DeHoCo, the Detroit House of Corrections. The photographer had just come back from an assignment at the facility.

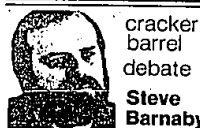
"Another photographer had a woman reporter with him," he said. "But if that wasn't bad enough, that reporter was his wife."

"I remember when I used to take prisoners to the stockade," I replied, recalling my days as an Army sergeant in California.

"Stockade" is the Army's word for prison.

"Walking inside that place kept me straight. I was bound and determined I'd never get in trouble while I was in the Army," I said.

NO MATTER what you call it, "prison," "stockade," "brig," "correction center," they're all about the same. They've pretty much failed as places to help anyone. Most of the time a person is worse for the wear after serving time — sometimes a little more sophisticated as a criminal, but worse for the wear, nevertheless.



cracker barrel debate
Steve Barnaby

Society has just never been willing to back a rehabilitation program with enough money to make it work. The word rehabilitation brings a sneer to the faces of those who see prisons as a place to punish and a grimace to supporters who have watched it fail.

In truth, our prisons have become nothing more than warehouses in which we store various types of criminals — not all types, mind you, mostly the kind who are unable to afford an attorney or who are habitual criminals of one sort or another.

The rest — the smart and the wealthy — mostly go free.

FINDING A purpose for a system that has failed us is a task, indeed. That's not to say that someday society may come around and really deal with the problems of crime and prisons. But, for the time, let's talk about today.

Well, today we can save some kids from the fate of prison by having them spend a

day in one of those medieval detention centers. Oh, now wait a minute. I'm not talking about taking little Johnny or Susie and shutting them up in the clinic.

Let's give them a look-see. Let's take 'em on a tour. Crammed in to one of those busy school years full of trips to the petting farm, the nature trail and the science center, let's show 'em a prison.

I know, I can hear some of you now. Sure some folks who end up habitual criminals won't be deterred by a tour of a prison. I agree. It's true that a lot of criminals don't realize their conduct is antisocial. They think they'll never get caught.

BUT A lot of kids get in trouble because of the overwhelming peer pressure that comes along with growing up. And as most parents realize, countering the influence of peer pressure is almost an impossible job.

It goes without saying that in a teen's mind, friends know better than mom and dad.

So let's show 'em what it's really like inside the walls and the cages. Let's show 'em how we house and feed those we chose to put in prison. Let's have 'em talk with those whom we put away.

I'll bet they'll think twice before listening to a friend about committing a crime.

Good girl in a clean dress

POOR SUZANNE Reynolds, the lady from West Bloomfield who chairs the Oakland Community College board, reminds one of the good little girl in the short story by "Saki," pen name of British author H.H. Munro.

The little girl so excelled in all her studies that village school gave her a medal. In the provincial examinations she topped all the other students in everything, winning five more medals, plus a special medal for overall achievement.

At home she was perfectly obedient to her parents, angelic to her tiny brother, and she never, never, never got as much as a spot on her clean white dress. Her Sunday school accordingly awarded her still another medal.

The king heard of her accomplishments, summoned her to court, was instantly satisfied that she was indeed the finest child imaginable and awarded her the largest medal of all.

THE KING also bestowed on her another honor — a visit to his special royal garden.

As the good little girl walked through the garden, a mean old wolf crept in. Now the wolf's eyesight was dim, but the good little girl's spotlessly clean dress and medals shone so bedazzlingly in the sun that he couldn't miss her.

The wolf bounded after her. Frightened, the little girl tried to run, but all the medals she had won for being so good



Tim Richard

weighed her down, and the wolf quickly caught up with her.

From a balcony, the king's court watched horrified as the wolf dragged the poor little girl into the bushes. All they found of her were a few threads from her white dress and her medals, much dented from the wolf's fangs.

Moral: Good girls in clean dresses get devoured.

POLITICAL WOLVES are after Suzanne Reynolds, who is both an elected trustee of OCC and executive secretary of the OCC Foundation.

She almost gushes with good feeling about the college. To her, OCC is like a triple-dip ice cream cone in the eyes of a little girl. She works tirelessly to advance the institution which brings college education to 27,000 students in their back yards.

The hurt shows in her eyes as she deals with the charge of conflict of interest between her two positions. How, she seems to wonder, can anyone think badly of her

work, her sparkling good will, her long hours?

Indeed, the conflict of interest is trivial, given the \$7,500 per annum she was paid for the foundation work — the kind of wages President Reagan proposes to pay unskilled teenagers.

ATTORNEY GENERAL Frank Kelley, however, finds she is "reaping personal financial benefit" from the foundation job, in violation of MCL 358.1112.

Reynolds was part of a board committee which recommended creation of the foundation; she was one of incorporators of the private, non-profit foundation; and she is its low-paid executive director.

Pettifoggish questions of law aside, the public has good reason for casting a suspicious eye at board members who happen to be there when administrative jobs open up.

Remember how Oakland County commissioners, prior to creation of the county executive in 1974, used to appoint themselves to administrative jobs? Remember how Wayne County commissioners, prior to the charter in 1983, frequently doubled their salaries by appointing themselves to administrative jobs? It was unsavory.

An excellent trustee and unwavering lover of OCC, Suzanne Reynolds is now weighed down with medals. In the form of her foundation job. She should cast aside the medals before the wolves get her.