

File photo

This is an east view of the Heritage Park estate house, the former Spicer family residence.

Parks millage worth passing

SAY YES to parks in Farmington Hills.

But then make sure the city delivers on its pledge of more city-owned recreational facilities as outlined in its revised master parks and recreation plan.

Nearly 500 Farmington Hills households took the time to complete a recreational services survey last December. And most called for more developed recreational facilities to complement the assortment provided through school, subdivision and private facilities. Facilities for children and teens were rated particularly weak.

In a special election Tuesday, Farmington Hills voters will consider dedicating a half mill for parks development — the first such dedicated millage in the city's 12-year history. We urge voters to say yes on Tuesday.

The half mill would be levied for five years and raise \$3 million for nine priority projects. A productive five years would likely bring an updated master plan and a millage renewal request. The latest master plan revision contains a \$7 million shopping list for 1988-91.

IN LIGHT of more critical needs — roads, drains, police — there's no room in the city's \$19.5-million budget for major park development. And grants, even when available, require a match from the city.

Residents can't say they're in the dark about the lack of developed city-owned park land. They were involved in revising the master parks and recreation plan for two years.

If the half mill is approved, the cost — before applying any property tax breaks — will be \$15 a year for homeowners whose houses are worth \$50,000 and \$30 a year for those whose houses are worth \$120,000.

Emphasis on passive development of Heritage Park would be a top priority with millage approval — and for good reason. For starters, the park offers floristic and topographical diversity.

Nestled in a quiet residential zone, the picture-postcard, 212-acre tract is both a wildlife refuge and a nature preserve.

A tributary of the Rouge River traverses the property. How many other places can you find where trees were bent by the Indians to mark trails?

FRAGILE AND pristine, the acreage is a godsend to those who care about nature's best. The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission vows to keep it a passive recreation site as long as humanly practical — a vow the Observer won't let the city forget.

If the community eventually 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.

With much of the natural character of Farmington Hills giving way to subdivision, commercial and office development, it's unquestionably wise to hang onto some of what attracted the Farmington area's trailblazers. The 212 acres are a good representation of those attractions — the woods, the wildlife, the meadows, the marshes, the wildflowers,

What a new tax will buy

THE HALF mill that Farmington Hills voters will consider in a special election on Tuesday initially would be used to:

- Develop a 15-acre athletic park at the northwest corner of 13 Mile and Farmington roads. It would include three soccer fields, two baseball/softball fields, a fitness trail and a picnic area.

- Upgrade athletic sites at 16 public schools to accommodate youth play.

- Build a central storage site for youth athletic equipment.

- Develop an entranceway, parking, trails and hills at Heritage Park. Activities would include cross country skiing, hiking, nature study and sledding.

The millage later would be used to bring to Heritage Park such facilities as ponds for skating and hockey; a visitor center that includes an interpretive center, meeting rooms and an auditorium; picnic and playground areas; and a native species arboretum.

It also would provide money to renovate the existing estate house for public use and the sheep barn for cultural arts at Heritage Park.

the trees.

Acquired last year 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 dearly wanted the land to remain as virgin as possible.

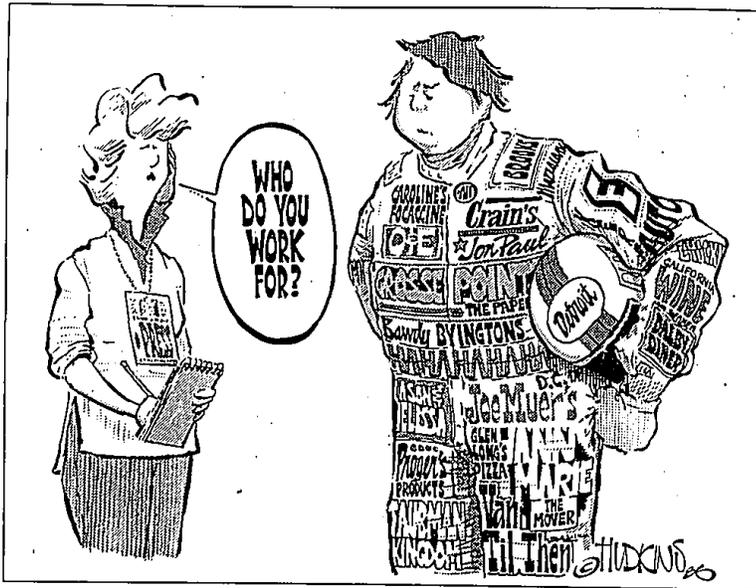
WE APPLAUD Farmington Hills' Parks and Recreation Commission and Department of Special Services for overseeing revision of the master parks and recreation plan and its ambitious five-year action program. But we also encourage the city to keep the spotlight trained on the historical value of the 60-year-old estate house in Heritage Park.

We understand the need to tread cautiously when evaluating building code and municipal liability requirements. Still, houses that had been placed in historic districts in other communities have been opened for public use.

We'd be very surprised if the estate house couldn't fulfill a useful community role while a part of Farmington Hills' historic district.

While we maintain vigilance over the estate house, Farmington Hills voters should say yes to parks on Tuesday.

— Farmington Observer



Suburban profile diverse

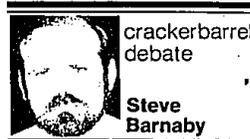
BEING a journalist is like compiling an encyclopedia of human nature. And compiling that encyclopedia in the Detroit suburbs can be exciting. A scan through recent issues of the Observer & Eccentric tells us a whole lot about ourselves.

YOU WOULD HAVE READ about former Governor Murray Van Wagoner if you had picked up the most-recent issue of the Farmington or Birmingham Paper.

I first met the governor about a decade ago after being appointed to the Botsford Hospital Board. He was 78 and I was 29. And while I may have felt a bit awed by being around someone who was governor before I was born, Van Wagoner didn't let that stop him from making a much younger board member feel welcome.

Age also didn't stop him from being a vital board member. Although he never talked much at the board table, when he did have something to say it was always important. That alone was an important lesson for the rookie board member to heed.

THE TRAGEDY of suicide was on the minds of folks in the Plymouth/Canton school district as motivational



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

speaker Jim Tuman spoke to students about suicide. Tuman is becoming well-known for his work with teenagers who are contemplating suicide.

The guy probably deserves a medal. While most of us pretend the problem doesn't exist, Tuman is making us face it.

CAROL AND MIKE GERMAIN, a couple who have dedicated themselves to foster parenting, recently were profiled in our Garden City newspaper. Majoring in child psychology at Madonna College, Carol wanted to get to know more about children before completing her formal education. Now their experience has come to mean much more.

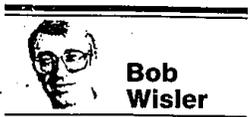
"Every child who comes into this house, whether they are mine or someone else's, is family," she said.

LIFE IS AN ADVENTURE for Doug Krause, a Bloomfield Township resident. An avid windsurfer, Krause is in training to circumnavigate the 400-mile Lake Titicaca on the Bolivia/Peru border. By the way, just to make it exciting, the main part of Krause's diet during the 20-day trek will be fish from the lake. Some adventure.

JULIE RUNK was profiled in the Farmington Observer after having spent time in Nicaragua helping local farmers. A recent Harrison High School grad, Runk was intent on going to see first-hand what was going on in Nicaragua. At first hesitant, her parents finally relented, and she was able to experience a piece of history in the making first hand.

WINSTON CHURCHILL appeared in the pages of the Redford Observer recently. Oh no, not the famous British Prime Minister, but the magistrate over at the 17th District Court who recently married 10 couples in one day. Last year, the retired FBI agent married 110 couples. Court workers say folks enjoy being married by someone with a famous historical name.

Chase problems persist



Bob Wisler

mitted a felony.

Police officers, on the other hand, almost invariably claim that they must be prepared to chase anyone who tries to elude a police officer because: 1) the police do not know at the moment whether the driver is fleeing from a felony or merely trying to avoid a traffic ticket; and 2) if the word gets out that police will not chase those who try to elude police, pretty soon everybody — from fleeing felon down to average driver who doesn't want a ticket — will get the idea that he or she can avoid contact with the police by outracing them.

STATE SENS. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield, and Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, last week introduced bills which they say will alleviate the problem.

The bills would make it tougher on drivers who try to elude police or who cause a death during a chase and harder

to charge police officers with negligence.

At initial look, it's hard to see where these bills will make our streets any safer. Making the penalties heavier for trying to elude police or causing death or injury while fleeing police presumes that the kind of people who try to elude police will somehow be more cognizant of increased penalties and therefore say to self: "Oh, oh. Better give up, the penalty for avoiding police could put me in jail for a longer period." Unlikely. As most criminals give little thought to possible consequences when they commit a crime, people who try to avoid police give little reflection to the course of action they engage in when they decide to outrun the cops.

The people the law should be dealing with in an attempt to stop the death toll from police chases are police officers, not those who would flee. At least, presumably, they can think more rationally about chases. The Senate bills offered by Nichols and Fessler don't deal effectively in this area, however, and, if anything, give police more immunity from being culpable in a chase situation.

One of the problems and therefore say police hate to give up, to let anyone flout the law, even a minor infraction, by in essence thumbing a nose at the coppers while speeding away.