

Opinion

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Hey, DDA

Name a project manager with care

RAT-A-TAT-TAT. Rat-a-tat-tat. With workmen hammering throughout Farmington's central business district these days, that's a familiar sound. It's the sound of a town on the move — for the better.

After years of talk about downtown redevelopment but little new investment, people are beginning to see the promise in rehabilitating a smaller central business district.

To lead the way, the city is planning new pedestrian lighting, shade trees, sidewalks and planters, more parking, a spruced-up mini park, a new mini plaza and other capital improvements.

We've got a natural in our downtown. All we need to do is polish it up. Each storefront has its own character. Each building speaks for itself.

Distinctiveness isn't lacking. Nor is new investment. Village Commons is rising from a former lumber yard. Fox Point will soon move to a renovated former factory. Farmer Jack is now Perry Drugs. Godmar Pharmacy now Real Estate One. Hardee's now Dimitri's.

BUT BRICKS and mortar provide a framework for buildings, not downtowns. It takes people to parlay potential into productivity.

So Farmington's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is right on in planning to hire an executive director,



Bob Sklar

commonly called a project manager.

But it would be foolish to sit back and consider only applicants who respond to ads. Rochester's DDA hired its project manager after seeing her speak at a Michigan Main Street Program seminar in Flint.

It's the project manager who wields leadership for a downtown caught in the battle for consumer dollars. It's the project manager who instills pride among property owners, shopkeepers and city leaders alike.

The key task of convincing absentee landlords to either fix up their properties, or consider selling them to someone who will, also belongs to the project manager. So does the job of making downtown a community centerpiece, not just a place to shop.

Unlike DDA members, who as business people and civic volunteers must use more subtle persuasion, the project manager is beholden to no one but the DDA and the city council.

ONLY A project manager has the

where-withal — using both gentle and direct encouragement — to rally merchants around a common purpose and deepen their commitment to downtown.

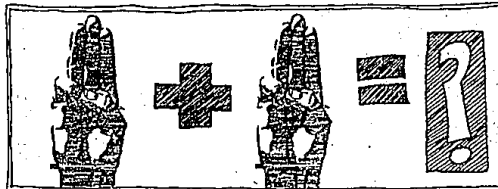
But make no mistake about it. A project manager long on rah-rah but short on know-how won't cut it. Skills must span both.

Not only must a project manager be familiar with architectural design, but also consumer wants, beautification, low-interest loans, marketing strategy, inventory expansion, sales promotions, window displays, government grants, historical preservation, even tourism.

As the hub of downtown Farmington, Grand River is the ideal place to base the project manager. Working alongside merchants and shoppers is the best way to sense gradual shifts in mood or the quieting of cash registers.

Selecting a project manager rests with the DDA. But there's no reason why the Downtown Farmington Business Association can't step forward and help shape a job description for the person who will play a pivotal part in rejuvenating the central business district.

A rejuvenated central business district — shepherded by the right project manager — should quickly spill over into Farmington's historic district and the neighborhoods beyond, strengthening community spirit and property values along the way.



Educate scouts on life together

IT'S TIME WE integrated an American institution — scouting.

You heard me correctly. It's time we raised boys and girls together so they learn how to live together when they become men and women.

So far we have failed. By the time children get to be adults, the lessons are learned. It's just too late.

Scouting could earn a place of significance in our social history beyond anything it has accomplished if it took this giant step.

I don't know about you, but I sure would like my child to have all the same chances as the next.

Nothing extra, mind you. Just that when hiring is done and the promotions are handed out, I want the rules to be the same for everyone.

But as we all know, that's hardly the case when it comes to women in the workplace.

"Sure, it's getting better," you may say.

But I say in return, "that's not good enough."

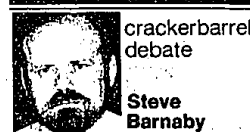
"GETTING" THERE is a far cry from "being" there.

And women just aren't allowed to be "there" yet.

I was thinking about this recently while watching several troops of Girl Scouts from the Farmington Hills area celebrate the 75th anniversary of their organization.

Some of the speeches given talked of sisterhood and celebrating the idea of sharing the experience of growing up to be women.

But, I thought to myself, if the next generation of girls are going to grow up to be women with a status truly recognized as equal to male counterparts, we



crackerbarrel debate
Steve Barnaby

have to transcend this idea of sisterhood and brotherhood.

In order for men and women to live together in harmony and understanding, they must be brought up together as children.

CERTAINLY, THE foundation of the Girl Scouts was justified. It was an important step in elevating girls from a mere reflection of Boy Scouts, to a self-sustaining group with its own dreams, goals and ideals.

It demonstrated to girls that they were indeed equal during a time when an overwhelming majority of the population viewed them as inferior.

And while it is essential that girls grow up to be self-confident women, it's equally important that boys grow up to be men who realize that women are their equals.

The problem isn't equality. Women are equal. But a lot of boys are brought up to believe differently. Many girls are, too.

Just as in race, separation on the basis of gender creates the feeling among the dominant group of superiority.

Many men still feel threatened by women in the marketplace. It's unfamiliar competition they never had to face when young. Let's make it familiar.

Ideas take beating from judge's ruling

U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE William Broadway Hand last week banned 45 history, social studies and home economics textbooks from Alabama's largest school district because, he says, the books teach godless humanism.

It is not enough to note that Major Frank Burns has found life after "M*A*S*H" by sitting on a Southern judicial bench. Nor is it enough to note that, in the hearts, minds and souls of the fundamentalist right, the term "godless humanism" is redundant.

Many of you, I suspect, do not know what secular humanism is. Many foes can't easily define it, but they know they don't like it. They believe, according to the Associated Press, that secular humanism is a religion that teaches that man rather than God is the center of the universe.

IF SECULAR humanism is a religion, then it is unconstitutional to teach it in tax-supported public schools. That's what the fundamentalists say, and that's what Judge Hand ruled. Not everyone agrees.

"I have a great reservation, quite frankly, about banning, about judges interfering with local decision-making, and particularly prescribing what should be taught in schools or not taught in schools," said U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese who otherwise is not known as a knee-jerk liberal interested in messing with the lives of right-thinking folk.

Many words used by social workers are vague and morally neutered. But these statements, read in context, tell us that DSS is aiding, abetting, helping and encouraging the child-parents of illegitimate children to keep it up.

At taxpayer expense.

ANNE CLEMENC, leader of the 1913 copper strike in the Upper Peninsula, was born March 2, 1886. The wife of a miner, "Tall Annie," as she was called, carried a large American flag in her daily marches in Keweenaw County.



Rich Perlberg

If Edwin Meese is disturbed about the prospect of special interests dictating the content of school books, then it should be unnecessary to point out that, although powerful, the printed word is something to be cherished, not feared; that ideas should be encouraged, not swept into dank warehouses.

AND WHAT ideas? Here, from the judge's decision, are a few excerpts that led to the books' demise: "We can direct our own lives instead of letting others do the directing for us. Each of us can become the kind of person we want to be." Or, "Your set of values will never be finalized. Your values change as you change." Or, "Self-actualization is the highest level of human needs."

These writings can be criticized for grammatical mistakes and for the horrendous use of "self-actualization" and "internalized." But it is not unconstitutional to use bad grammar or educational jargon. It should be, but it's not. According to Judge Hand, it is unconstitutional to teach "secular humanism." It shouldn't be, but it is.

Michigan 150 years old

ANNE CLEMENC, leader of the 1913 copper strike in the Upper Peninsula, was born March 2, 1886. The wife of a miner, "Tall Annie," as she was called, carried a large American flag in her daily marches in Keweenaw County.

The miners won an eight-hour day and a minimum wage of \$3 daily. Annie Clemenc lived until 1956 and is honored in the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame in Lansing.



State backs the wrong things

ECONOMISTS HAVE A rule of thumb: If you want more of something, subsidize it; if you want less, tax it.

For 25 years, Michigan has been paying people to have babies out of wedlock, providing welfare and other social services. The state found the cash by cutting education from 52 percent of the budget to less than 30 and by increasing social services from 11 percent to more than 30.

With less state aid, our colleges require higher tuition; our local schools require higher property taxes.

BEN. DAN DeGROW, R-Fort Huron, made a big splash in Lansing last week with his proposal for "a major redirection in Michigan welfare policy to break the cycle of dependency."

His \$30 million plan has many details but one aim: to subsidize desirable behavior. Examples:

• Stay in school — Welfare grants would be cut to a parent where a kid doesn't maintain an 80-percent attendance record. The parent has an incentive to get the kid to class.

• Graduate — Any low-income Michigan resident (defined as family income less than \$11,000) under 20 who completes high school and has not become pregnant or fathered a child would receive a voucher for two years' education at any community college in the state. Two incentives: Complete high school and don't have illegitimate kids.

• Find a job — Low-income kids

America has a 20-percent illegitimacy rate, and it's growing among all races. If we think like DSS, we'll subsidize more of the same. If we think like DeGROW, we'll subsidize school attendance, graduation, college work and family values.



Tim Richard

who don't go to college but do get a job and hold it two years get a prize of \$1,000 cash.

There's more, but you get the drift. IN CONTRAST, the state Department of Social Services took the opposite approach in its 74-page report to the Governor's Human Services Cabinet.

It never even uses the words "illegitimate" or "out-of-wedlock." Instead, it uses the misleading terms "teen pregnancy" and "teen parenting," indicating it fails to identify the problem.

It advocates even more subsidies for those who have illegitimate children, asking for "categorical eligible for general assistance for pregnant or parenting teens and the children." This should be for teens ineligible for ADC, medical assistance or food stamps.