

Opinion

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Rouge cleanup needs support

THE ROUGE RIVER can survive and flourish if you show up to help out.

For many who watch the slow-moving river eek its way through suburbia, it's tough to believe that anything can be done to save the river that was once so polluted it caught fire.

But on June 6 Jim Murray and his group of faithful from "Friends of the Rouge" will challenge one of the most polluted rivers in the country.

You should show up, too.

Several municipalities are aiding in this effort so your time will be well-spent in an organized effort to keep a cleaner river moving.

You should show up because you and millions of others around the metropolitan area are major contributors to the river's pollution.

That's right. We must look to ourselves as the major polluters. While corporate America does its share, it isn't the major contributor.

The majority of Rouge River pollution is from 6 billion gallons of human waste sent into the river each year through a combined storm/raw sewage system. And while millions of dollars will have to be spent to correct the problem, it is you and I who must lead the way by our actions.

The problem is compounded by people who look upon the Rouge as a dump site, throwing bottles, shopping baskets, motor oil and other miscellaneous debris into the stream.

The Rouge can be a clean river for us to enjoy rather than a suburban embarrassment. But communities must take responsibility for cleaning up their portions. Certainly to be successful, local, county, state and federal resources must be used.

But we, the people, must set the stride and join the cleanup effort.

It's a day in the life of this river that could change the course of our communities.

Here's how to help

THE ROUGE cleanup is scheduled for June 6 and volunteers are urgently needed. Registration will begin at the following sites at 8:30 a.m., the day of the clean up. Phone numbers are also included for those who wish to register early.

• Oakland County: George Bondi, 858-0957; north side of 14 Mile between Farmington Road and Orchard Lake Road; site sponsor is the Oakland County office of drain commissioner.

• Canton Township: Dave Schneider, 397-1000; Morton Taylor Road, one block north of Michigan Ave.

• Birmingham: Coco Stewart, 642-7024; city metered parking lot east side of North Woodward, south of Oak.

• Southfield: Steve Marshall, 354-

9540; Beech Woods Park.

• Farmington: Earl Billing, 473-9520; Shiawassee Park, Power and Shiawassee.

• Farmington Hills: Dale Coughton, 473-9520; Farmington Hills City Hall, corner of Orchard Lake Road and Eleven Mile.

• Westland: Ralph Tack, 728-1770; Nankin Mills.

• Livonia: Jeanne Treff, 421-2000, Ext. 351; Levan Knolls Picnic Area, between Stark and Newburgh.

• Plymouth and Plymouth Township: Esther Hulsing, 453-3840; Riverside and Hines Drive.

In Clarenceville, override Headlee

IT ONLY amounts to about \$3.75 a month.

That's how much residents living in a \$50,000 home in the Clarenceville School District can expect to save if taxes are rolled back because of the Headlee amendment.

The district — which serves residents in the southeastern portion of Farmington Hills — is asking voters not to take that \$3.75 away by approving an override of the Headlee amendment.

Clarenceville residents should vote yes to override Headlee when they go to the polls Monday, June 8.

Overriding the complicated Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment — which requires governments to roll back tax rates when property values increase more than the cost of living — would allow the schools to continue improving without putting the pinch on taxpayers.

FIRST OFF, the district is not asking for a rate increase. A yes vote will allow the schools to maintain the current tax rate.

Sure, the amount of taxes paid to the schools will increase because property values are going up. But the actual tax rate, which was renewed by voters in 1985 and 1986, will remain the same if the override is approved.

"The quality of a school district has an impact on property values," said Clarenceville Superintendent Mike Sibler.

He's right. School quality plays an important role in determining the desirability of a community and the value of homes.

Plus, rolling back the tax rate would not generate a financial bonanza for homeowners.

THE TOTAL savings for a typical homeowner in the district would

amount to \$45 a year, or that \$3.75 a month.

That's not even enough for one movie ticket or a best-selling paperback a month.

Contrast the tax savings with the effect a rollback would have on the school system.

A rollback would severely crimp the progress the district has made in the past several years. In that time, the district created an academic letter program, surveyed residents and mandated competency tests for students, to name just a few examples.

Continuing academic progress has a price.

If voters don't override Headlee, the district would have to cut its tax rate for operations from \$37.90 for every \$1,000 of assessed value (one-half of the market value) to \$36.10.

BY CUTTING the tax rate, the district loses more than just local revenue. State aid would be trimmed.

The state aid formula — which provides 28 percent of Clarenceville's income — is based on the number of students and the district's tax rate.

So a cut in the tax rate means a cut in state aid.

The combined loss of state aid and the rollback of local property tax rates would cut almost \$290,000 from the budget.

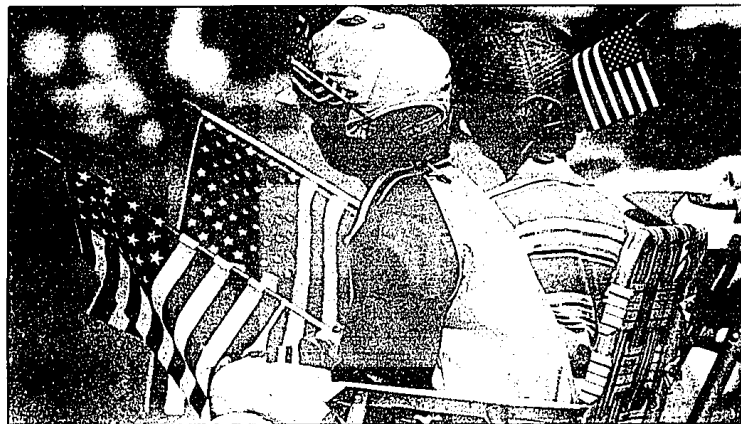
That's a hefty chunk from a \$7.3 million budget.

And because the district spends the bulk of its money on teachers, the cuts would likely occur in that area.

That means larger class size and fewer course offerings.

When all the facts are considered, that \$3.75 a month in tax savings is not worth the damage it could do to the education of children in the community.

Precious moments



It was a warm, sunny day, perfect to spend barbecuing, fixing up the boat or poking around the garden. Some folks even remembered the reason they had the day off from work. Monday was Memorial Day, a day set aside to remember the U.S. veterans who gave their lives in search of peace. But the crowd that gathered

around Farmington's War Memorial to honor the memory of local veterans looked decidedly smaller than in years past. The irony was that if ever a Memorial Day held special meaning, it was this year, coming within days of the tragedy of the USS Stark in the darkened waters of the Persian Gulf.

Emotions cloud day care

THE MAJORITY rules.

As a result, group day care homes for up to 12 children are permitted only on major roads in Farmington Hills, a city with 4,000 preschoolers. Family day care homes of up to six children are permitted anywhere in a single-family zone.

There's a nagging feeling the split city council vote that denied allowing group day care homes inside subs, if certain conditions were met, was based more on emotion than fact.

It's possible the larger homes could produce more noise and traffic than family day care homes. It's possible nearby property values could fall because prospective buyers balked at living near a house full of children.

When the matter of home day care first surfaced at a Board of Zoning Appeals meeting in December, I, too, was leery about group day care homes inside subs.

But I never questioned the need for home day care. With the cost of suburban housing straining the typical family budget, and with more women exercising their right to hold down a career, having mom and dad both work no longer is a rarity.

SURE, HOME day care is a business in the sense money is exchanged and liability insurance is paid. But most pro-



Bob Sklar

viders aren't primary wage earners. Moreover, providing home day care isn't the same as practicing law or doing beautician work from home. Home day care providers baby sit — a clearly residential characteristic.

After attending every public discussion that followed the zoning board hearing, I agree with Mayor Ben Marks and councilwomen Joan Dudley and Jan Dolan. The notion that a group day care home inside a sub creates a hardship for neighbors has never been documented.

True, group day care homes allow the hiring of a second caregiver. And an employee gives a group day care home more of a commercial air than a family day care home. But no one could argue the merit of having a second adult around when 12 children are together.

COUNCIL MEMBERS Donn Wolf, Terry Sever, Joe Alkateeb and Jody Soronen, who rejected group day care homes inside subs, fell into the trap of

thinking a boisterous crowd at a public hearing means truly widespread opposition.

Alkateeb says his vote, liberalizing family day care homes but limiting group day care homes, reflected the community's pulse. Perhaps. But even if 300 people turned out for a particular hearing, that's less than 1 percent of the city's registered voters.

The Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills argued that its 32-0 vote in opposition to liberalizing group day care homes represented most of the 25,000 residents who live in its member subs.

To me, the only legitimate deduction from the vote is that the 32 homeowner association liaisons who voted oppose liberalization. It didn't convince me the majority of residents whom the associations represent share their liaison's view.

UNDER THE city's new home day care regulations, all homes must now be licensed by the state, registered with the city and inspected by the fire department. They also must have a smoke detector in all daytime sleeping areas.

These regulations will protect neighborhoods far more than the arbitrary decision that a day care home with six kids means a baby-sitting service but one with seven means it's a business.

Cruising: really a symptom

"CRUISING."

Holy. Never thought I'd hear that term again. But there it was glaring out from the newspaper page.

"100 ticketed for violations in cruising."

Seems that a usually genteel Plymouth has become "the" spot for young men and women to congregate. They've taken to riding up and down Main Street doing all the things that people that age do.

You remember. Sure that's correct. You remember those weekend evenings when gas was cheap and the most important thing in the world was gathering with your friends and meeting new ones.

Sure did get rowdy, sometimes. Well, gas sure isn't cheap anymore. But with more change in their pockets than previous generations, hundreds of teens and young adults headed for Plymouth a few weekends back.

JUST THE anticipation was too much for the local town folk. Police were ordered to the streets in anticipation of the youth invasion. Tickets were issued left and right.

But that certainly hasn't dampened the ardor of the cruisers. Memorial weekend a near-equal number of tick-



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

ets were issued.

Actually, town officials are taking the wrong tact. What they should do is issue a proclamation welcoming all the cruisers and then stand in the middle of Main Street and present it to the first group to arrive. They could even give a prize for the 1,000th cruiser.

After all, Plymouth spends the rest of the year welcoming thousands to a variety of festivals, why not a Cruising Festival?

Sounds nuts, sure. But just think how dumb it would be to be seen cruising Plymouth if the city leaders approved.

BELIEVE ME, nobody would show. Teens are like that.

Plymouth isn't the only city that goes through this thrash. It just happens to be the latest most popular spot.

Over the years, suburban youth have

congregated in one town or another to drive local residents bonkers.

For years, Birmingham's Woodward strip has been one of the most popular in all of southeastern Michigan. Redford police have suffered through myriad years of Telegraph Road cruisers. And, of course, we all remember the years along Hines Drive when cruisers outnumbered picnickers by the thousands.

For some reason some adults, who really were kids once upon a time, forget and end up handling these situations all wrong.

Everybody thought their worries were over when the police showed cruisers out of Hines Drive. But all it really did was drive them to another area — most notably Plymouth.

ADULTS FORGET that teenagers and young adults must have some place to socialize. But many adults object to wherever younger people gather.

The attitude seems to be, "I don't care where you go just so it isn't in my neighborhood."

Drive-ins, drive-in restaurants, video arcades all have come and gone. And this country has survived. It might survive a little more comfortably if adults would quit making such a fuss.