

Opinion

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Census Counts

Governor's funding cut unfair

IT SURE seemed like a blue-chip investment by any Wall Street standard.

Wager about \$50,000 in taxpayer money and secure a three-year return of about \$1.35 million.

Given that backdrop, the Farmington Hills City Council was justified in seeking a mid-decade census to more accurately reflect the city's population.

A gain of at least 9,000 residents was anticipated. The city's certified mid-decade head count turned out to be 68,020, up 10,964, or 17 percent, from 1980.

With a mid-decade population boost of at least 15 percent, Farmington Hills expected to receive an additional \$450,000 in state shared revenue for 1988, 1989 and 1990.

State shared revenue isn't play money. In 1987-88, Farmington Hills expects to receive \$3.4 million, which represents 16 percent of the city's \$21.4 million budget.

The anticipated supplemental census revenue wasn't destined for municipal luxuries like chauffeured limos.

It was tentatively earmarked for fire protection and road improvements, two needs that residents have repeatedly named as high priority.

POPULATION AFFECTS how much money communities get back in state shared revenue for selected public projects and in state gas and weight tax revenue for general road work. State statute provides for special payments to communities that qualify through a mid-decade census.

Without the mid-decade census, Farmington Hills' federal and state grants and transfers would have continued to be based on the last decennial census in 1980.

At least that's what city leaders were led to believe by state statute and past practice.

But it may not turn out that way.

In a surprise move, Gov. Blanchard vetoed all supplemental payments otherwise headed to communities with the fastest-growing populations.

We're not suggesting that the state operate in

We concur with Farmington Hills city manager William Costick that the least the governor can do is reinstate the (mid-decade census) payments, then reduce them proportionate to other budget cuts.

the red merely to accommodate those 38 communities which conducted mid-decade head counts at their expense and in good faith.

But let's be fair. At stake to them is \$4 million.

We concur with Farmington Hills city manager William Costick that the least the governor can do is reinstate the payments, then reduce them proportionate to other budget cuts.

SO TO Census Counts, the ad hoc group of communities that have felt the sting of Blanchard's budget slashing, we say, "Right on!"

The group, chaired by Costick, isn't fluttering in the dark.

It counts the Michigan Municipal League and the Michigan Townships Association among its supporters. And its agenda includes potential meetings with the governor, the state budget director and key legislators.

Both state Rep. Wilbur Brotherton, R-Farmington, and state Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, have been instrumental in Costick's bid to reach a consensus on the census.

Given the sorry state of the state's budget five years ago, we're all for "rebuilding and maintaining fiscal integrity," as Blanchard put it in explaining his supplemental payments veto.

But not honoring the required payments is a slap at the 38 communities shouldering the state's greatest spurts in population and experiencing all the related service and safety demands.

No way should they have to bear such a blow in compensating for a \$100,000 shortfall in the state budget.

Wetlands serve as a vital area for the state's wildlife, providing habitat for fish, fowl and other animals.

that generate great amounts of support or tourism like Pictured Rocks or Sleeping Bear Dunes.

But their practical applications are enormous. Wetlands serve as a vital area for the state's wildlife, providing habitat for fish, fowl and other animals.

Wetlands also fulfill an important hydrological function — they filter pollution and sediments out of our water.

Wetland regulations require developers to get a permit from the DNR to build on these areas. If the developer fills in a wetland, he is required to build another one.

The wetland preservation issue has become a center of attention because developers are unable, in some instances, to use property because of the presence of wetlands.

WEST BLOOMFIELD has enacted its own wetlands ordinance. A wetland in Southfield created a stir when 1-696 planners realized it cut across the freeway path. And 1-275 property owners in Livonia have encountered wetland regulations as they attempt to develop their land.

Problems with enforcing the act have developed because 1) there is no clear definition of where wetlands are located, and 2) the time it takes to get DNR approval to build on, or relocate the wetlands.

Diluting the protection act might solve the problem in the short-range, but could result in more massive destruction of our remaining wetlands.

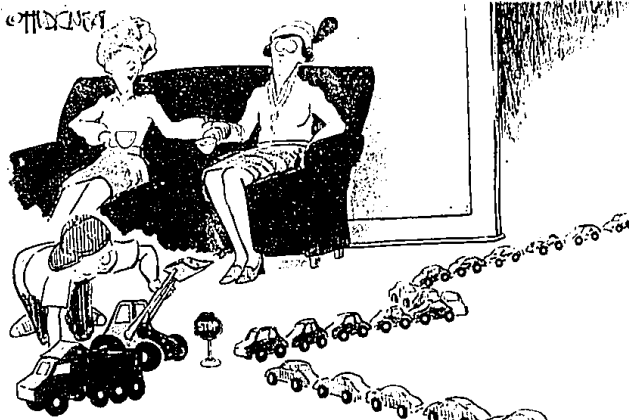
As is often the case in Lansing, the Legislature, back in 1979, approved the new program without providing enough money to enforce its provisions.

Now as business grows in Michigan, the DNR finds itself understaffed and unable to handle building requests in a timely fashion.

The department expects to receive more than 7,000 applications this year to build on wetlands, or other protected lands, compared to 2,696 requests in 1980.

The DNR said it eventually approves 85 to 90 percent of all applications, as proposed, or with modifications.

But without the additional cash and research, both developers and those concerned about the environment will never be sure if the Wetlands Protection Act is a benefit for state residents.



HE SHOWS SUCH AN APPETITE FOR HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.

Memo to Hills voters: Don't vote uninformed

SO WHAT if there's a city council election coming up in Farmington Hills?

Few voters seemingly care, if the anemic 14 percent turnout in the last city council contest two years ago is any indication.

With two weeks to go before voters fill four Farmington Hills City Council seats from among three incumbents and six challengers, some residents may think their vote won't matter. But I don't buy that.

Consider the 1985 election: Terry Sever beat out Jonathan Grant by seven votes. Voters obviously had a direct say in who got to sit on the city's governing board.

That's how it should be. Special interest groups shouldn't dictate this year's or any other year's city council race. Nor should behind-the-scenes political maneuvering.

Well-informed voters, representing a cross-section of the city, should.

WHO is best qualified to serve on the council can best be determined by voters who care enough about their city to invest the time necessary to dissect each candidate's campaign platforms.

Candidate nights have unfurled a host of issues in the Hills — congested traffic, solid waste disposal, commercial intrusion on neighborhoods, parks development, crime, needs of teens and the elderly, leadership.



Bob Sklar

It's hard to predict whether this year's voter turnout will top that of two years ago. The candidate nights have been sparsely attended. But that could be because Metrovision's cable Channel 12 will broadcast the debates several times this month.

Still, nine candidates are running this year, instead of the five who squared off in 1985. That number alone should bring out a few more voters.

Regardless of the year, it's just as essential for the voters to grasp the issues as it is for the candidates.

VOTERS WITH only passing knowledge of each candidate's stands not only cheat themselves but also render a disservice to the whole community.

With so many Farmington Hills candidates this year, there's a very real threat the city council race will turn into a name recognition or popularity contest, which is no way to select leaders. No candidate should have the luxury of winning without having to demonstrate a sincere,

abiding interest in the public's welfare.

The city council sets municipal policy, passes ordinances and acts on rezoning requests. It listens to complaints about rough roads, noisy neighbors and safety concerns. It decides how much you'll pay in taxes and how that money will be spent.

Clearly, not everyone is delighted with the council's current makeup.

Small, but vocal bands of residents and proponents often turn out to present ideas, raise questions and protest actions — in short, practicing representative democracy at its best.

I CAN remember disgruntled residents on at least two occasions mumbling something about recall when council votes didn't go their way.

But I don't think the recall process was intended to oust lawmakers for doing what they were elected to do — use their judgment and legislate.

The ballot box is the proper place to register disenchantment.

No voter who truly gives a darn about Farmington Hills' well being should forsake the right to vote Tuesday, Nov. 3. Voting is more than a privilege. It's a responsibility.

So come Election Day, vote — regardless of whose candidacies you support. Don't let the political leanings of a handful dictate the outcome. Study up. Have a say. Care!

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Help support small business

To the editor:

It sometimes seems as if there will be no limit to the increasing cost of doing business in America. Yet, as responsible citizens, we know that our small business must never be subjected to the same fate that befell the goose that laid the golden egg.

Measured side by side, American small businesses employ a greater percentage of our workforce than do our larger industries combined. As a member of the Small Business Committee for over 15 years, I realize the impact this commercial sector has on the well-being of America.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we in Congress do everything in our power to see that the small businessman is taken into consideration whenever business-related legislation is proposed.

It is for that reason that I have joined in co-sponsoring House Resolution 188. This proposal would provide in-depth analyses and impact reports for all legislation affecting small business. In this way, we would be considering the intent of the legislation, and its consequences for business if it became law.

Our businesses are already heavily burdened with many government-ordered safety and social purpose programs. From meeting OSHA re-

quirements, to continuing health coverage for terminated employees and their dependents, to paying half of each of the increases in Social Security premiums, we pay a high price for these programs.

Now, our Congress is considering many more proposals. There is the stability of mandated parental or medical leave coverage, health risk pool premium surcharges, mandated minimum health insurance coverage and catastrophic health care coverage.

No one wants our business to be unsafe, or our workers unprotected. However, we must also look at the total impact that these requirements will have on the ability of business to stay in business.

William Broomfield,
U.S. representative
18th District

Dudley views are criticized

To the editor:

I wonder how many other Farmington Hills residents were offended by Joan Dudley's recent mailing and her comments in your recent issue in her effort to be re-elected to the city council?

She relates that some of her fellow council members have warned her that she is facing "political suicide" by taking some positions — implying that she is the only one with the

courage to do so!

Her comments regarding her continuing push for expanding regulations for (home) day-care facilities for seniors and children in subdivision confines was especially ridiculous. She claims that "private day-care homes, not institutions," are the answer. Institutions? For children of working mothers? For seniors?

Further, her suggestion that possible summer concerns and an art center will help solve the problems of juvenile petty crime, alcohol use and vandalism is simplistic. What ever gave her the idea that these malcontents would be attracted to that kind of activity?

Ms. Dudley claims that Hills residents can control further development of their community despite the "empty promises some politicians make." She says we must be "reasonable and consistent" to win in the courts, but doesn't offer a single suggestion as to how that is going to be accomplished. Certainly not by the further encroachment into the subdivisions, as she advocates with her hand on (home) day-care facilities!

Most of us advocate the acquisition of recreational land while it is still available; however, denying (public) funds for the renovation of the Spicer House, so that it can be used to its full potential as a unique community asset, is shortsighted. This community should be able to accomplish both of these projects (with public funds).

Joan Rolick,
Farmington Hills

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Michigan, at the turn of the century, had close to 12 million acres of wetlands. Today, that figure is closer to 3 million acres.