

Opinion

33203 Grand River/Farmington, MI 48024 Robert Sklar editor/477-5450

14A(F)

O&E Thursday, October 29, 1987

Hills council

Leadership — a pivotal need

BALANCED leadership is the chief characteristic that's necessary as Farmington Hills nears full development and all the related quality of life demands.

That priority need influenced our endorsements in this year's hotly contested Farmington Hills City Council race.

We looked for people who would command the public's respect as daring thinkers dedicated to the city's well being. And we looked for people with credentials rooted in the community and developed over a significant period of time.

Balanced leadership is pivotal as the council tackles a host of quality of life concerns: solid waste disposal, underbuilt roads, youth activities, library service, crime prevention, land use, zoning, parks, needs of the elderly.

Within this backdrop, we endorse the candidacies of two-term incumbents Joan Dudley and Joe Alkateeb and challengers Jean Fox and Aldo Vagnozzi for the four opening seats on the city council.

DUDLEY, AN attorney, and Alkateeb, an electrical engineer, view the city from divergent points of view.

Dudley, who has devoted countless hours to promoting youth programs and easing ethnic tensions, is a maverick of sorts — and quotable to boot.

More liberal than Alkateeb, Dudley has an inquisitive, probing style that sometimes comes across as combative. But that impression is more an outgrowth of her trying to emphatically argue an opposing point than of her deliberately trying to be condescending.

Streetwise, she's a stickler for detail. You can count on her to speak up whenever there's a potential for city policy infringing on civil liberties. Her skill for seeing "the other side" is rare.

We don't always agree with her. But we find no fault with her quest for consistency and fairness. She's openminded and doesn't play politics. Her tough questions and gutsy stands should be respected, not denigrated.

Questionable election tactics have surfaced throughout this election campaign. A code of ethics for the city council, as proposed by Dudley, would go a long way toward deterring that problem in the future.

ALKATEEB JOINED the council as a fiscal conservative. In recent years, he has modified his position to allow municipal services to keep pace with the city's phenomenal growth.

Outspoken, Alkateeb has built a reputation for responding to what ordinary folks who come before the council have to say. He tries hard to trigger discussion or rally support, no matter how controversial a consideration may be. And he asks lots of informative questions.

He's more narrowminded on some issues than we'd like. And he has a tendency to play politics. But he long has fought on behalf of Farmington Hills homeowners and seems to represent a significant constituency.

As mayor in 1986, he seemed to be everywhere. He carried the city banner proudly. At the council table, he sometimes cut people off prematurely. But he kept the seemingly interminable meetings moving. He worked hard to provide leadership and a sense of direction for the city.

County primary

We lean toward Jaffe Oaks

WHAT AN interesting matchup in the 21st Oakland County Commission District primary election!

On the Democratic side, the matron of city politics faces off against the hard-hitting, freshman school board member who believes he's there to do more than attend recitals.

It's a tough call, but we lean toward the veteran, Lillian Jaffe Oaks.

In any other race, it would be Eric Coleman whom we would recommend without a moment's hesitation. After all, the guy did just what he said he would on the Southfield school board while he was campaigning.

Coleman helped rescind the once yearly tax collection that had been passed by a lame-duck board. Having worked independently with a group of young people, Coleman was interested in a tougher student code of conduct that stressed weapons behavior.

THE WHOLE point of all this is to ask where will Coleman be most effective? County commissioners don't do that much, especially Democratic ones on a Republican-controlled body.

On the other hand, Coleman adds a dimension not found in other school board members. We need his leadership on the board, with the promise that his turn will come when something

Farmington has an election, too!

Hey, Farmington voters: You've got a city council race, too.

Just because the only candidates for three opening seats are incumbents Ralph Yoder, William Hartsock and Richard Tupper, that doesn't mean there's no incentive to vote.

Consider: The two top vote-getters will serve four-year terms. A two-year term will go to the third-place finisher.

In a city where only 25 percent of the electorate traditionally votes, your vote will sway who'll influence city policy for how long.

Your vote will count in determining the top two finishers.

AS A devoted council watcher, Vagnozzi has been a kind of "eighth" council member for 25 years.

Year in and year out, the former school board and library board trustee has spoken out with authority and courage. It's obvious he does his homework.

No fan of blindly criticizing the city council, Vagnozzi, an editorial consultant, typically offers a responsible option he thinks would work better.

He's willing to compromise, but not at the expense of a person's civil liberties. He offers long-standing community involvement. His even temperament would provide a balancing effect during heated council debates.

Fox, a longtime area resident and retired businesswoman, offers a distinguished community service record. Just as examples, she formerly chaired the city's zoning board of appeals and historic district commission and currently vice-chairs the county's parks and recreation commission.

Nobody's puppet. Fox would add valuable insight to debates about land use planning, rezoning requests, municipal spending, park development, historical preservation and the environment.

Articulate and feisty, she's not afraid to strip off the kid gloves and bare knuckle it with anyone she feels is trying to shortchange the city she loves so dearly.

We don't always share her conservative philosophy, but we nonetheless respect the experience, wisdom and values she would bring to the council.

IT'S SUPPOSED to be non-partisan. But the campaign trail has become littered with partisan politicking.

Contributors to many of the candidate's campaigns are well-known Republican Party or Democratic Party activists. Even the local Republican and Democratic clubs give the appearance of lining up behind candidates.

But we urge voters to think non-partisan when they go to the polls Tuesday, Nov. 3. Maintain the spirit of the city charter provision designed to keep partisan politics out of city elections.

Meanwhile, no matter who you vote for, vote. Don't complain later, if you don't register your vote now.

better comes up. Besides, when someone runs for a school board seat, he or she should be committing to the full term.

His main opponent, Jaffe Oaks, is well-known in Southfield's political circles, having served on the Southfield city council for eight years, one year as council president.

AFTER GIVING up her council seat, she was appointed by Gov. James Blanchard to serve on commissions dealing with education, jobs and economic development.

If elected to the county commission, the former United Community Services of Oakland County advisory board member promises to make the needs of the area's senior adults a top priority.

She has the time it will take to cover her district, which includes a small portion of Farmington Hills, and to work to ensure they get their fair share of revenues, resources and services from the county board.

She has the energy and the presence to make a difference. But like her opponent, her knowledge of the issues needs strengthening, and she must become a scrappier opponent in a Republican-dominated county government if she wins in the general election.

She has the energy and the presence to make a difference. But like her opponent, her knowledge of the issues needs strengthening, and she must become a scrappier opponent in a Republican-dominated county government if she wins in the general election.

She has the energy and the presence to make a difference. But like her opponent, her knowledge of the issues needs strengthening, and she must become a scrappier opponent in a Republican-dominated county government if she wins in the general election.

OPINION



Education

Money is only a partial solution

IT COSTS an estimated \$143 a day, \$52,195 a year, to put a kid in a youth home.

That's one of the best reasons we can think of for strengthening Michigan's educational system.

For youth home residents and other troubled youngsters, the faces change but the profile remains the same — almost invariably they cannot read, cannot perform simple mathematic functions and lack even the rudimentary skills needed to get and keep a job.

It's a grim picture. And it's getting worse. The future for untrained, unskilled workers grows increasingly dim in this computerized, specialized age.

IT'S TIME we spent more on education. But let's spend our money, time and energy wisely.

The Harden Commission, a state study group headed by a former Michigan State University president, has put forth a number of bold proposals for overhauling public education in our state.

Many of these proposals have already been presented on these pages. Most undoubtedly will be debated by citizens and school officials throughout our state.

There's a danger, however, that the boldest proposal — closing the gap in per-pupil spending among Michigan public school districts — will obscure what should be the real educational goal: boosting literacy among Michigan public school students.

Equalizing the amount of money spent per pupil is a worthy goal, but even commission members admit it's only part of the solution.

BECAUSE TEACHER salaries and benefits account for such a large proportion of school budgets, inequality of dollars spent per pupil reflects an inequality of teacher pay as much as a lack of quality education. While teacher salaries in many districts are shockingly low, spending more per student won't automatically translate

into a more literate, employable crop of students.

Rather than tying up our schools and state government in a lengthy debate on per-pupil spending, it's time we urged them to move quickly to help produce more self-supporting graduates.

It's time we demanded our youngsters were literate, not only with regard to reading skills but in mathematics, science and the basic citizenship principles upon which our nation is built.

To do that, we need to band together to press our elected officials into making literacy a top state priority.

WE NEED to demand our governor declare an "educational emergency," providing both a climate and timetable for change.

We need to demand the Michigan Department of Education develop programs to boost reading, writing and thinking skills among struggling students.

We need to demand our state legislators dig up the money to support these programs, as well as to retrain teachers in financially strapped school districts in how to implement them.

We need to demand our local school districts implement these programs — and, if necessary, give them the money to do so.

And we need to work with our local schools — and our kids — in seeing to it that every high school graduate can become a productive member of society. It's time business and school leaders sat down, locally and statewide, to discuss the kind of employee needed for future jobs.

It's too easy to become trapped in a financial debate that will only pit rich school districts against poor ones, ultimately wasting everyone's time.

There's a generation at risk. Time is short, but the answer is clear. If we don't move to meet their needs now, we'll be doomed to provide for their needs from this point forward.

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.

Grand River speeds high

To the editor:

It has been a major concern of mine, that speed limits on Grand River Avenue through town are not being (strictly) enforced.

Cars, trucks, even school buses, are exceeding the posted limits. Traffic traveling through town east from Gill Road toward Farmington Road is extremely bad and the same is true for westbound traffic through town and out past Oakwood Cemetery.

I would challenge you to try and drive the posted limit, other drivers would be right on your rear bumper or past you, far exceeding the speed limits.

It is not uncommon to have people shaking their heads or flat, like you're doing something wrong, or give you an unfriendly hand gesture.

We have all exceeded the speed limit at one time or another, but through town is not the time or place to test your speeding ability.

Safety is my main belief for send-

ing this letter. It is not uncommon to call the police to report an accident in front of the funeral home. Pedestrians get absolutely no respect; you take your life in your hands in trying to cross Grand River. It's almost impossible to make a left turn off Liberty Street at heavy traffic times; not only the amount of traffic makes it difficult, but the traffic speeders make it dangerous.

The Farmington police must make an extra effort to enforce the speed limits on Grand River. The use of radar and traffic cars being visible should be a direct deterrent to speeders. If more tickets were issued to speeders, I'm sure the word would be out: don't speed through Farmington.

The Downtown Development Authority and the city of Farmington are wasting time and money installing street lighting, planting trees and planning for the future of Farmington unless we slow down traffic to a reasonable speed.

Robert Rock, director, Thayer-Rock Funeral Home Farmington

Responds Farmington Department of Public Safety deputy director Gary Goss: "I can't argue."

Speeds on Grand River through the center of town are a problem. But we're making a definite effort to slow them down. We're giving the area more attention. Part of the problem is that, for eastbound traffic, the posted speed limit slows from 45 mph to 35 to 25. We're varying our times and strictly enforcing posted limits. So beware of them and abide by them."

Coverage wonderful

To the editor:

On behalf of Father Norbert Kenderdick, and the Oktoberfest II Planning Committee, I would like to extend to you our most sincere appreciation for the wonderful coverage of Oktoberfest in conjunction with the papal visit, published in the Farmington Observer on Thursday, Sept. 24.

It was most impressive and delighted our parishioners.

Linda L. Gratz, Church of St. Fabian Farmington Hills

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor
Rich Periborg assistant managing editor
Dick Isham general manager
Richard Brady advertising manager
Fred Wright circulation manager

Suburban Communications Corp.
Philip Power chairman of the board
Richard Aginias president