

Opinion

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

12A(F)

O&E Thursday, February 18, 1988

Choices

Exciting idea needs shakeout

IT'S called choices.

And it sounds intriguing. But we'll reserve final judgement until more details are unveiled March 1. In the wake of 60 letters a day opposing attendance boundary changes to ease elementary overcrowding, Superintendent Graham Lewis proposed a new westside elementary, facility additions, reopening Shiawassee School and a choice of educational programs using 49 vacant classrooms.

At first blush, it looks like Lewis dodged a bullet with his specialized programming proposal — a creative solution to overcrowded classrooms. His assessment of the proposed boundary changes drove home why they came up short, despite the Citizens Planning Panel's hard work: "The changes would not ensure long-term stability or be receptive to the greater number of parents of the community."

NO ONE is downplaying the overcrowded conditions. A member of the Concerned Citizens Coalition acknowledged, "We do have a problem and something must be done." It's clear the burden now falls squarely on parents who objected so vehemently to boundary changes to support the specialized programming when suitable for their children.

Parental indifference in light of all the new development in western Farmington Hills will no doubt intensify overcrowding, regardless of whether a new elementary is built and existing schools are improved.

As Lewis put it: "We have to rely on the desire of parents to opt for choice programs." Assistant superintendent Mary Lou Ankele outlined potential choices at a public hearing Jan. 19: centralized kindergarten, developmental kindergarten, magnet-type offerings, gifted and talented programs, reopening Shiawassee and Highland schools, even year-round school.

"The idea," she said, "is to promote innovative instruction, permitting grouping across grades as

'We have to rely on the desire of parents to opt for choice programs.'

— Graham Lewis
superintendent

necessary and a greater opportunity for educational enrichment."

We echo trustee Janice Rolnick, who called Ankele's ideas "extremely exciting." They dovetail nicely into the plea from one concerned parent, who said: "Student welfare is our top priority. Spend tax dollars wisely and make the best use of available space."

LEWIS is talking about providing what he calls a common campus setup — magnet-type programs in individual classrooms throughout the district.

That borrows from the flex approach offered to some degree at the senior high level. There, students from each of the three schools may attend a particular school offering a program unique to the district. For example, Latin is available only at Farmington High.

Lewis recognizes his two-year pilot plan won't end overcrowding at some elementary schools. But we agree with him that allowing parents to choose between specialized programs or attendance at their home school should provide enrollment relief at many schools.

Provided the school board gives formal approval, Lewis must assure imaginative and workable programming. Parents, meanwhile, must use the alternative programming they have rallied so unabashedly for.

Unmistakably, student redistribution in the elementary is needed. But it best works when there's a cooperative spirit between schools and parents. Only then are children less apt to become political pawns.

Patient's right

Law would provide guidance

THE TIME has come for the state to recognize a patient's right of medical self-determination.

Our legislators must provide a legal means by which patient wishes may be honored without foisting criminal and civil liability on medical professionals and family members honoring those wishes.

In granting Clifford Culham, a Farmington Hills resident suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease, the right to be disconnected from a ventilator in December, Oakland Circuit Judge David Breck cast the sharpest light:

"Life is hard enough without artificially prolonging a dying patient's agony . . . The least society can do for these unfortunates, and especially the courts if necessary, is to allow them to choose early death with dignity and comfort."

WE SUPPORT efforts by state Reps. David Hollister, D-Lansing and Nick Caramituro, D-Roseville, to legislate patient rights by amending the state probate code.

We urge the legislators to hammer out their differences and enact law to serve dying and incapacitated patients and their families, who have been forced to look to courts for answers in the absence of much-needed legislation.

We support legislation allowing patients to designate an advocate who will carry out their expressed desires for medical treatment, including termination.

We support legislation to serve patients who become unable to make health care decisions by allowing them to make their desires known in advance.

We urge the legislators to hammer out their differences and enact law to serve dying and incapacitated patients and their families, who have been forced to look to courts for answers in the absence of much-needed legislation.

Legislation will not provide an absolute solution to the increasing myriad of patient circumstances. But it is an important vehicle for acknowledging and adhering to patient self-determination in the wake of overnight advances in medical technology and treatment.

DECADES AGO, terminally ill patients would have died a natural death. Today death is forestalled and ultimately dependent on the on-off switch of sophisticated medical equipment.

A patient's right of free choice in determining the type of care and treatment, including termination, underscores the spirit of the much-needed legislation.

We support the inclusion of three important provisions in the patients' rights legislation to meld humaneness with a patient's right of free choice.

A provision declaring that a patient advocate must adhere to patient desires, rather than what may be determined to be the patient's best interests, must be included to ensure the right of patient self-determination.

We support prohibiting the withholding of food and water as a means of hastening death. Food and water are among the most basic human needs.

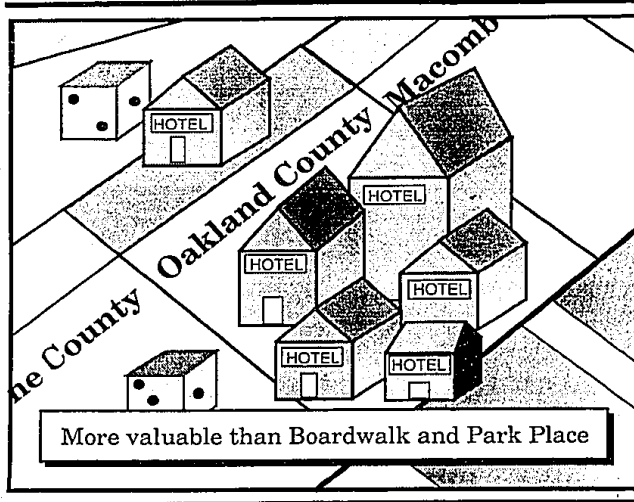
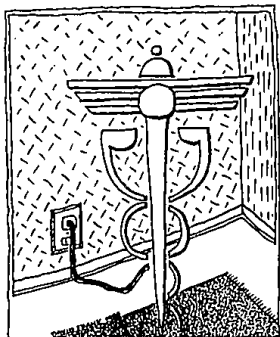
We support prohibiting a patient advocate from exercising medical treatment for a pregnant patient that would be detrimental to the embryo or fetus without probate court approval.

We strongly urge interest groups to avoid side-tracking legislation with continuing debate on this issue. It is legal in this state to protect a fetus or embryo.

WE SUPPORT legislation ensuring the protection of health care professionals who carry out patient wishes. Legislation must ensure that a physician will not be held liable for carrying out a patient's expressed medical desires.

While physicians, philosophers and legislators continue struggling with a definition of life, dying patients linger in frustration and agony as captives of modern medical technology.

As that technology advances daily and medical cures lag steadily behind, the need to provide a legal, safe and secure process for patients to determine their own fate remains paramount.



Don't skip school vote; subs aren't dragways

THINGS I'VE been meaning to say:

• Was I surprised by the 1.9 percent turnout in Farmington Public Schools' millage renewal election last week? Not really.

The district, one of the state's largest and richest, hasn't done very well in picking voter interest.

Last year, only 692 voters, 1.3 percent, cared enough to vote in the annual school board election. Only 832, 1.4 percent, took the time to renew 4 mills for operations.

The 1986 school board election fared a bit better. It drew 1,036 voters, 2 percent.

Last week, 968 voters, 1.9 percent, renewed 5.75 mills, worth \$8 million, or 12 percent of the district's \$66 million operating budget. So few people wielded so much power.

What's amazing is that total barely topped the turnout at two recent public meetings the school board hosted for feedback to proposed boundary and facility changes.

In a representative democracy, you're guaranteed the right to vote. You're not forced to vote. But I've



Bob Sklar

always thought voting was sort of a given.

I'm embarrassed to report that Warner Middle School, where I vote, had the poorest turnout of the district's four voting precincts. Only 157 of my neighbors joined my wife and I at the polls.

Non-voters couldn't even blame the weather. Last week's big snowstorm didn't arrive until two days later.

I can't explain why voters have so little regard for school elections. It's hard to believe they don't realize the education of more than 10,000 students, our pool of future leaders, is at stake.

I do know voting is more than a privilege. It's a responsibility.

• I have no sympathy for lead-footed motorists who view winding subdivision streets as a sort of mini-raceway, no matter what the season. The problem is worse in subs without sidewalks, where the road edge serves as a pathway for kids and adults alike. Wintry conditions only intensify the problem, giving speeders even less of a chance of stop in time.

Traffic officers can't be in every sub every minute of every day. But when alerted, they step up enforcement in subs where speeding is acute and dangerous.

If your neighborhood regularly resembles a dragstrip at certain times of the day, alert your subdivision association and either the Farmington or Farmington Hills police.

"Be specific," says Sgt. Ray Cranston of the Farmington Hills Police Department Traffic Safety Bureau.

"Tell us what's happening, where it's happening and when it's happening. It's extremely important to include the time of day."

Despite what some motorists may think, subdivision streets are meant to be shared with pedestrians.

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.

Coverage applauded

To the editor:

Thank you for the fine coverage of the Farmington Area Jaycees Community Leadership Prayer Breakfast on Jan. 19. Please extend our gratitude to other members of the Observer who contributed. The breakfast was a success.

Thank you for your support and we hope to see you at future Jaycees events in our community.

Kay Hlan, breakfast chair,
Farmington Area Jaycees

Where's the traffic light?

To the editor:

Where's the light? The light that has been promised at the corner of Grove Street and Grand River about two blocks east of the main intersection of beautiful downtown Farmington? Answer: It isn't there yet.

The light has been on the drawing board for the last two years. Earlier this fall, city hall said October, at a December council meeting, the assembled were told that it would be January.

This is February.

Where's the light? Speaking of lights, the timing of the Alta Loma/Farmington Road light should be changed so that persons racing through the intersection of Grand River and Farmington

Road cannot speed through the Alta Loma light without having to stop. I have seen many a car already at about 35 miles per hour as the driver passed the Arbor Drugs area.

Lee S. Peel,
Farmington

Editor's note: The state is responsible for the Groves Street light, not the city.

Washington: special man

To the editor:

It was 256 years ago Feb. 22, George Washington was born. We were colonies being ruled by a British king. We didn't have a president, nor were we the United States then. We survived the French and Indian War of 1754, the Boston Massacre of 1770 and the American Revolution of 1775. It took the courage of men and women to make us the free nation we are today.

That is the reason why we have a president, not a king. Glory, glory, hallelujah. America is still free.

Vernon K. Klepinski,
Farmington Hills

Let's prevent road gridlock

To the editor:

A review of some 2 1/4 inches of background files, letters, news clippings and the like gathered for the past two years can only result in the conclusion that . . . little if anything

has taken place to relieve traffic congestion . . . especially along the Orchard Lake Road and Northwestern Highway corridors. Meanwhile, intense new construction has continued that can only compound the congestion problems.

True, Farmington Hills' improvements made possible by a road millage and in West Bloomfield the help by developers that resulted in paving Farmington Road from 14 Mile Road to Maple have been positive steps forward. Nonetheless, numerous low-cost suggestions regarding left turn signals, light timing, lane marking, saw cuts — to mention a few — appear to have fallen on deaf ears.

The joint committee on roads, formed in April 1986, last met in September 1986. Even having the Oakland County Road Commission perform up-to-date traffic counts seems to be an unreasonable request. With our current data, how can planners project the impact of proposed new developments?

There are many issues facing local residents in this election year. Underlying almost every issue — PPD, moratoriums, Section 34, cluster ordinance, overdevelopment, etc. — is the IMPACT such proposals will have on the basic issue . . . "Roads and Traffic Congestion."

Top priority must be given to these festering road problems by West Bloomfield Township officials and planners. Many practical solutions have been presented for discussion. Action, not words, is needed to at least hold in check the growth rate of traffic congestion in West Bloomfield and surrounding areas.

Ken Poye, president,
GATEWAY+PLUS,
West Bloomfield

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

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

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