

# Opinion

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

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## Garbage

### Disposal a mounting concern

IT'S NOT something you pay much attention to — until it piles up. Then it's a potent concern. Solid waste disposal isn't a major problem in Farmington or Farmington Hills yet. But it's a crisis in the making.

Americans generate more than twice as much waste per person as residents in Japan or West Germany. We throw away a ton of garbage a year per person, says Gordon Boyd, an Albany-based consultant on waste management.

Both Farmington and Farmington Hills contract for household trash to be picked up and hauled to a Washtenaw County landfill, whose capacity is anywhere from 5-20 years.

The landfill operator, Browning-Ferris Industries, a national waste disposal company, has a sort of monopoly because of its size and location. And it hasn't shied from boosting dumping costs.

So each of us had better take heed when the six-city consortium that includes Farmington and Farmington Hills unveils its recommended options to soaring disposal costs Wednesday in Southfield.

The consortium has hired a Kansas City-based consulting firm to do a 5- to 10-year study about what can be done to stem such costs.

"BECAUSE THE issue is so great and the impact is so significant, we better take a hard look at this," says Thomas Blasell, Farmington Hills public services director. "We want what's best for the community and what is reasonable in the long term."

The consortium study will include a long look at Oakland County's solid waste disposal plan. The plan, now 5 years old, calls for a solid waste incinerator and waste energy recovery plant, a sanitary landfill, and a glass-newspaper recycling system.

One reason consortium members opted out of the county plan is because out-of-county landfill costs, though volatile, are still projected to be considerably cheaper.

## Tiger Stadium II

### New park must be accessible

THERE'S A new baseball season underway and, as in the past, it will prompt hundreds of thousands of suburbanites and city-dwellers into joining together at Tiger Stadium.

This is a positive happening. In these days of self-contained suburbs and an increasingly isolated inner city, the old ballpark is one of a dwindling number of places where suburbanites and city dwellers routinely gather for a common cause.

But this isn't a long, teary tome on why Tiger Stadium should be preserved. The old ballpark is just that. Its oldest parts date back three-quarters of a century, its newest parts date back a half-century. A decision is clearly due on its future, or lack of one.

Given the advantages of modern architecture, we think there's considerable merit to building a replacement stadium — but only if the new stadium retains the best parts of the old.

Thus far, most talk has centered on artificial turf as well as whether Tiger Stadium II should be enclosed underneath a dome. These aren't bad issues, we ourselves have a preference for real grass and fresh air. But they just aren't the major issue.

THE MAJOR issue, as well as the best part of old Tiger Stadium, is the way it serves as a meeting place for people from throughout our region.

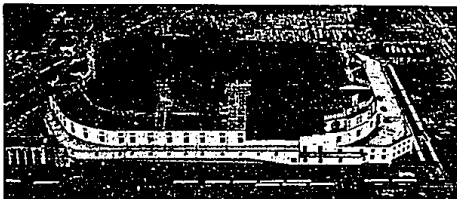
That should continue. Any new stadium should be easily accessible from all parts of metropolitan Detroit.

At first, that might appear to be a given. But it's not exactly guaranteed, despite statements by current Tiger and city management.

Real or imagined fears about downtown Detroit and its surrounding area, not to mention available land and lucrative tax deals, could make it entirely possible that a new stadium might not be centrally located.

It's not as if other teams haven't followed that

Tiger Stadium is one of a dwindling number of places where suburbanites and city dwellers routinely gather for a common cause.



FILE PHOTO

**So each of us had better take heed when the six-city consortium that includes Farmington and Farmington Hills unveils its recommended options to soaring disposal costs Wednesday in Southfield.**

But landfills fill up. So the county plan one day may look more attractive. That day might come sooner than later if landfill costs continue to rise relentlessly.

One of most critical problems facing the county and the consortium is choosing landfill sites. No community wants them. They're not only costly to build but also to operate because of tough environmental regulations.

UNDER THE county plan, Farmington and Farmington Hills could face paying \$40-\$50 a ton for solid waste disposal, more than six times the present city costs. By the time the plan is in full swing, the cost could be \$80 a ton.

Also under the county plan, communities must dispose of not only household waste, but also all commercial, industrial and institutional waste. Farmington, for example, could see its costs jump from \$92,000 to between \$875,000 and \$1.4 million by 1993 to accomplish this task.

Unanswered is how the huge disposal and administrative costs related to the county plan would be paid.

The next time you lug your trash to the curb, think about how you'd feel if nobody picked it up once a week, or if that service cost you hundreds, or thousands, of dollars a year.

Beware that the time isn't too far off when consortium cities will have a crucial decision to make to avert one of the most dreaded fears of any community — having a ton of trash and having no place to put it.

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lead. Neither the Pontiac Silverdome nor the new Auburn Hills Palace are located near the heart of our region. Both are a pretty far weeknight drive from Plymouth, Livonia and Farmington Hills — not to mention Garden City and Canton Township.

But basketball, football and hockey differ from baseball in terms of fan makeup. All three are more heavily dependent upon luxury boxes and season ticket sales, upon professionals and sales people who use access to sporting events to lure or reward customers.

BASEBALL is different. It's more dependent upon people who walk up to the ticket window the day of the game.

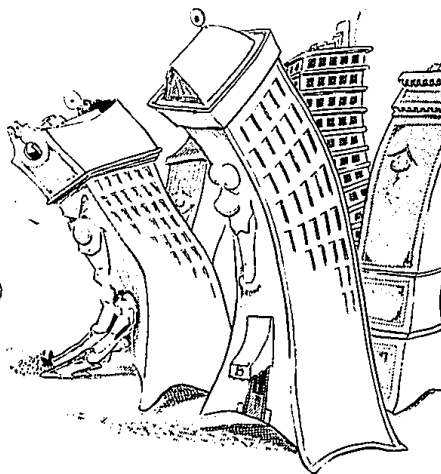
That's going to be pretty difficult for suburbanites if the new ballpark is tucked away in a corner of Detroit — and difficult for city-dwellers if it's tucked away in some far flung suburb.

Old Tiger Stadium, despite its age and flaws is still close to a number of freeways. Access is easy from Grosse Pointe or Ann Arbor, from Rochester or Rockwood. Whoever builds the new stadium should keep that in mind.

Twice in the past five years, all of us — urban and suburban — have gathered together to cheer the Tigers on to the best record in baseball.

Who knows what we might accomplish if someday that spirit could extend to solving our area's problems?

THINKING



## Education harmed by class size issue

Educational experts are at it once again — fighting over class size. You can bet some of your much-coveted property tax dollars that sometime during the next school year, the subject will raise its ugly head in your school district.

The most recent volley came in a report recently released by the U.S. Education Department.

The sum and substance boiled down to the concept that teachers really don't work all that hard right now and that reducing class size anywhere would pretty much be a waste of your tax dollars.

Of course, the national bureaucrats were much more polite than the above paraphrase. Basically, the report said that secondary school teachers' work load "has never been lighter."

As mild as that language seems, it's enough to raise the hackles of teachers and their union officials. From their point of view, smaller class sizes have been offset by gnawing social problems which include, but are not limited to, rampant drug abuse among students, parental indifference, lack of financial support from taxpayers and, in some cases, student anarchy in both hallway and classroom.

And the problems aren't exclusive to large city school districts. Many suburban districts suffer from the

same maladies.

The report, "Class Size and Public Policy: Politics and Panacea," said efforts to boost students' test scores through smaller classes "will probably be a waste of money and effort."

INSTEAD, THE report suggests, teachers should do a better job of managing the children in their classrooms rather than to waste money on re-education of class size.

Wow, that's a pretty harsh indictment of this generation's educators — far too harsh.

Now it is true that reducing class size certainly hasn't been the panacea many thought it would be when teachers rallied to the cause back in the halcyon student enrollment days of the baby boom generation.

For the most part, the majority of us survived four people to a locker, classes in storage rooms and 45 kids in a room. Now don't get me wrong, it wasn't heaven. But we did survive and, in many cases, have done very well.

Since 1960 average classroom size in public high schools has decreased from 30 to 24. Secondary school size is down to 22, from 27.

The National Education Association (NEA), the largest teacher union, has set a national target of 15 students, certainly an ambitious, if not impossible and unnecessary goal.



Steve Barnaby

The government report labels the cost of such a program at \$69 billion a year and the hiring of one million new teachers.

Now this comes at a time of overwhelming taxpayer protest and, believe it or not, a nationwide teacher shortage.

In truth, teachers do, in many aspects, have a much more difficult job than in previous decades because of social problems unheard of in 1960. But playing the numbers game will only distract from solving the real problems of social discontent and confusion about the role of education in this country.

Educational leaders, national and local, parents and administrators need to quit taking nasty swipes at one another and should put their heads together to work toward developing realistic solutions to very real problems.

And class size isn't one of them.

## 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.

### Classes not about occult

To the editor:

This letter is in response to a headline that appeared in the Monday, March 28, edition of your paper on page 7B. The headline read "Occult Classes Coming to Center."

As executive director for the Farmington Community Center, I am concerned that this misrepresentation of our programming will have a negative effect on our perceptions by the public. We have not offered nor will we ever offer classes or programs dealing in the occult.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines the word occult as: 1. Of, pertaining to, dealing with, or knowledge in supernatural influences, agencies, or phenomena. 2. Beyond the realm of human comprehension; mysterious; inscrutable. 3. Available only to the initiate; not divulged; secret.

Beyond this definition, the word occult carries with it a more powerful and symbolic meaning that suggests satanism, witchcraft and voodooism. We, as a community center, do not want to be associated with these concepts and hope that you can clarify this to your readers.

Some of the classes that we offer here at the center are designed to appeal to people who want to understand and enrich themselves by reaching a higher level of awareness to the many forces that govern their

lives. These are not classes in the occult. They are classes that attempt to put people in touch with themselves and thereby take control of their own futures and destinies.

Dorothy M. Pfaff,  
Executive Director,  
Farmington Community Center

### Road repair is just inept

To the editor:

How long will the taxpayers tolerate the poorly maintained roads of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties? The political establishment who blindly drive on these same roads should demand an end to the ineptness of repair causing the gross deterioration of our road system.

Cracks five to 50 feet long, some three inches wide, are not uncommon. Holes at manhole covers, curb drains and pavement joint intersections are everywhere. It is no wonder that every 10 blocks has a wheel alignment, tire, shock absorber or exhaust replacement shop.

The patching material used by the road repair crews is provided for emergency chuckhole situations. The material is sticky asphalt-coated stone, the size of popped corn, and does not compact some fine stone and sand to give the patch a better chance of survival.

Providers of this inferior patch material to the various road commissions must enjoy the perpetual

purchase orders they receive for a product that has a poor design mix and won't do the job.

I suggest our county politicians and, more importantly, road officials take a look around them, notice the poor quality of road maintenance their roads are getting.

They must get on top of this problem and make an effort to preserve their counties' largest and fastest depreciating capital investment, our road system.

John F. Stenson,  
Farmington

### Stanley's title was off mark

To the editor:

Your article (March 24) on the fight in the Michigan Legislature to pass the MacBride Principles referred to John Stanley as "Northern Ireland's deputy foreign minister."

We do not refer to Margaret Hickey as Ireland's ambassador; she is America's ambassador to Ireland. Likewise, Mr. Stanley is not Northern Ireland's deputy foreign minister; he is British Isles' deputy foreign minister for Northern Ireland. He is appointed by and takes his orders from the British government in London. He is not appointed by nor representative of the inhabitants of Northern Ireland.

Javan Kienzie,  
Southfield

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