

# Opinion

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

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## Right way

### Road plans mark compromise

THE COMMUNITY good was served. When it came to vote on design plans to pave a rustic stretch of Drake Road, the Farmington Hills City Council acceded to many resident demands but said no to others in the interest of engineering safety and cost efficiency.

No design plan can satisfy 200-plus residents. By any measure, Drake Road isn't your typical paving project. Few projects have generated more concern by residents or more sensitivity by planners. As Mayor Jody Soronen aptly put it, "No stone or curve or tree has been left unexamined."

The final plan culminated a yearlong push to guard the historical character and natural beauty of the winding, tree-lined road, just north of 11 Mile.

The push produced a host of public information meetings, Saturday morning walks and conceptual design plans. Give-and-take reigned supreme.

THROUGHOUT IT ALL, city manager William Costick made it his business to assure that resident concerns were given more than lip service.

Still, disenchantment lingers.

Some residents, equating pavement with faster driving, oppose the modified path of the road, even though one curve will be sharper and another will be added. Others feel the radius planned for the Howard Road curve isn't tight enough. A few don't want a passing lane at Howard, fearing it would be a launching pad to higher speeds.

Many said the city never told them they must help pay the \$1.3 million improvement cost, despite a longstanding policy to specially assist owners of property fronting a paving project. Even though Drake is a major road, residents will pay a fair share equivalent to that for a local road.

A Drake Road Citizens Committee leader, however, said he was 99 percent pleased with the design plan, given the council concessions.

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FOR STARTERS, the council delayed plans for a controversial sidewalk through the historic area. It did so partly because of right of way, topographic and cost concerns and partly because a walkway hasn't been built yet to the south, toward Grand River. Left unanswered is the issue of liability should a pedestrian be struck in the road.

The council also agreed to buy and move two historic houses to a nearby spot in preparation for preserving and reselling them.

It agreed to make the 11 Mile-Drake Road intersection a four-way stop, replant uprooted trees with mature stock and six plans for a passing lane at W. Lyman.

And it agreed to bar heavy truck traffic, prohibit passing and lower speeds through the area.

Concessions aside, some folks feel the city ignored their pleas. That feeling is a bit hard to understand, given how surprisingly fast the council delayed sidewalk construction and assured strict traffic enforcement. Besides, Drake is a major city road, for use by all residents.

But in the wake of that feeling, the onus falls squarely on the city manager and the city council to assure promises become reality. Despite the city's booming growth, Drake has retained much of its native vegetation — the result of nature winning out over "progress."

To protect that vestige of country charm, the city should act quickly to designate Drake a natural beauty road. That would be a lasting, fitting reminder of the road's sensitive environment.

## Bright lights

### Academic All-Stars honored

IF THIS IS truly a nation whose educational system is at risk, there are nonetheless plenty of bright young stars who can shine light on a hopeful future.

Many of these leaders of tomorrow are featured in today's newspapers as the Observer & Eccentric presents its fourth annual edition of the area's Academic All-Stars.

The format is different this year because for the first time a six-page special section details the achievements of not only the 15 Academic All-Stars from Observer-area high schools, but also those of 27 highly qualified runners-up. For the first three years, the All-Stars were featured on a regular page of the paper, which left less room for the runners-up.

The format is different but the selection process is the same. The All-Stars are chosen on an objective academic basis that is determined by a combination of grade point averages and national college test scores. The tabulation of scores and selection of All-Stars is done by a committee of area high school principals.

Chairing the committee again was Dr. Robert W. Schramke, principal of Redford Union High School and the man who four years ago came to the Observer & Eccentric newspapers with the idea for Academic All-Stars.

It was an excellent idea. Newspapers, including this one, regularly tout the all-star teams of numerous high school sports. Why not do the same for high school academics? Why not indeed.

The task is difficult because of the huge number of qualified candidates for the list. But it is a rewarding type of difficulty. To see the accomplishments of these young men and women and to read of their bold and confident plans for the future is a call for optimism.

There are still obstacles, to be sure. But the Academic All-Stars is proof of the many motivated students who are greatly assisted by concerned parents and dedicated school systems. We congratulate them all.

Here are the 1988 Observer All-Stars in order of ranking:

Suzanne Stokes of Bishop Borgess High School, Redford Township; Brendan Carney of Stevenson High School, Livonia; Minal Hajratwala of Plymouth-Canton High School, Canton Township; Heather Burrows of Churchill High School, Livonia; Robert Gibson of Lutheran High School, Westland; Douglas Donaldson, Plymouth Salem High School, Canton Township; Alexander Ballios, Stevenson High School, Livonia; Mary Strimel, Mercy High School, Farmington Hills; Neal Blatt, Harrison High School, Farmington Hills; Peter Hanish, Churchill High School, Livonia; Gregory Baise, Redford Union High School, Redford Township; Anna Lisa Raymundo, Mercy High School, Farmington Hills; Laura Porterfield, Plymouth Salem High School, Canton Township; David Burke, Redford Union High School, Redford Township; and Katherine Kretzer, Farmington High School.

Runners-up include: Stanley Abraham, Detroit Catholic Central, Redford Township; Brian Raney, Detroit Catholic Central; Stanley Koss, Thurston High School, Redford Township; James W. Nelson, Wayne Memorial High School, Wayne; Annette Chang, North Farmington High School, Farmington Hills; Catherine Cloutier, St. Agatha High School, Redford Township; Donna Dorr, Garden City High School, Garden City; Craig Draheim, Garden City High School; David Ford, John Glenn High School, Westland; Pamela G. Hall, Wayne Memorial High School; Matthew Haran, St. Agatha High School.

Other runners-up are Kimberly Hovey, John Glenn High School; Sarah Ann Lewis, Farmington High School; Ashley Maton, Lutheran High School, Westland; Alan MacNeill, Clarencville High School, Livonia; Deborah L. McKenney, Mercy High School, Farmington Hills; Melayna Morio, Plymouth Christian Academy, Canton Township; Marcella Pekala, Franklin High School, Livonia; Elaine M. Prather, Ladywood High School, Livonia; Donna Schaldenbrand, Ladywood High School; Stephen G. Shollack, Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland; Michelle K. Stockwell, Huron Valley Lutheran High School; Michael Van, Thurston High School; David E. Wheeler, Plymouth Christian Academy; Evan Yeung, Plymouth Canton High School, Canton Township; Tracy Zabel, Franklin High School; and David Zait, Clarencville High School.



HELLO, NEW RESIDENTS. MY NAME IS LANCE AND I'LL BE YOUR FRANCHISEE GUARDBPERSON.

## Center capital needs worthy of area drive

HE COULD be accused of seeking personal gain or glory.

But that's no reason to zap plans to raise \$200,000 for capital repairs to the Farmington Community Center, says Ben Marks.

And I concur, provided no insurmountable glitches arise. As the outspoken Farmington Hills city councilman put it: "If that's the price I have to pay, so be it. It was there for anybody else to do."

Indeed, it was. A gregarious civic booster, Marks is soliciting major business leaders in Farmington and Farmington Hills for what he envisions as a restricted fund to be tapped only for Farmington Community Center capital improvements.

Immediate needs include updating the heating, cooling and electrical systems. Improvements to the amphitheater to make it "a mini-Meadow Brook" are pegged at \$35,000.

Marks' pitch to the business community is simple: "You make a living here. This is your opportunity to put something back into the community."

The pitch apparently works. Pledges top \$125,000.

UNDER MARKS' plan, recognition plaques would be placed at those areas of the community center "adopted" by major donors — a widely used fund-raising technique both publicly and privately.



Bob Sklar

Calling the center "a treasure," Marks said, "It can never be a Cobo Hall, it can never be a Roma Hall, obviously because of its size. But it can be something that really serves the community."

"It augments whatever else we provide the community," he added. "And it's important to me. It enhances my way of life."

The fund-raiser grew out of a visit to a 1987 meeting where the executive board considered a new niche for the 19-year-old community center in the wake of a \$19,000 operating deficit.

Given the urgency of its financial plight, the board could have declared a crisis and preyed on public sympathy. But it wisely decided to put its financial house in order before asking residents and businesses to give more money for the \$300,000 a year operation.

NO QUESTION, the nonprofit center needs more consistent funding. General contributions and class or activity fees can't continue to bear the burden.

Marks' effort dovetails with a 1987 study that identified corporate funding as the most stable source of revenue. The study reinforced what the board recognized when groping for a new direction last spring: Center programs should complement, not duplicate, what's offered through other community agencies.

Making the center a cultural arts hot spot, while not compromising popular classes or activities, sounds particularly enticing.

A builder, Marks vows that neither he nor any of his subcontractors would do any of the center's capital repairs "to keep this squeaky clean."

Given his construction background and keen interest, I don't object to Marks helping review bids to assure the center gets the biggest bang for the buck.

WHATEVER BRICKBATS comes his way, Marks is content: "When I walk away from this town, I want to say I've done everything I possibly could to make it great."

His lead notwithstanding, operations and programming at the center demand equal creative attention. Traditional fund-raisers haven't proven to be the answer.

It's great to say the community values this living museum, tucked in a wooded nook off Farmington Road. But unless people make the effort to use, support and promote it, who's kidding whom?

## 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.

## Paper's view is perceptive

To the editor:

Your recent article concerning L. Brooks Patterson was rewarding, indeed, to read.

Congratulations for your perceptiveness and further congratulations for your willingness to print what many people observe to be the truth.

You have obviously taken a closer look at the roots of crime than those who respond only to what they see or hear on the local media. Regardless of what the masses choose to believe, statistics are on your side.

It is true that longtime problems require long-term solutions, but your views are at least in a more sane direction than L. Brooks Patterson's.

Genevieve Herman,  
Farmington Hills

## Faxon's vote bothers GOP

To the editor:

Recently a bill was passed by the Michigan Senate that would allow businesses to receive a 25-percent Small Business Tax credit up to \$1,000 for donations of either equipment or money to our local public or private school.

Good news for business and education, right? A great inducement for business to aid our ailing schools, right? Wrong! Ask Sen. Jack Faxon.

Faxon claims to be a proponent of our education system; however, he voted against this Republican-sponsored bill. "We're not going to be helping any school district in the state by encouraging gifts in the way of property in lieu of them purchasing," said Faxon on the Senate floor.

Why, then, did eight of his fellow Democratic senators vote in favor of this bill? Ask Jack Faxon.

I want to congratulate this bipartisan effort on the part of the Senate. Providing the opportunity of tax credits to business is good business.

Increasing the probability of donations to our local school system by business is good business as well.

With the recent debate on school financing still afloat, Faxon should be finding ways to be helping aid our schools, not voting against them.

Larry D. Dickerson, chairman  
Republican Committee  
of Oakland County

## Hospice care — appropriate

To the editor:

This letter is in response to your recent editorial regarding the life of Ralph Swoveland and the hospice concept of care.

Your lines were filled with your

grief at the death of a friend and co-worker and your sincere concern for all of the dynamics that surround dying. Please accept my heartfelt sympathy for your sorrow.

As fellow members of the Swoveland's church, his name, and those of Janice and the children have been the focus of prayers, pastoral support, and member caring activities over these past months of struggle and heartache. His death is a sorrow to many.

Needless to say, as the director of a hospice service, I share your views on the appropriateness of hospice when the hope of cure is no longer a reality.

It is because of our concern that the public be knowledgeable about the alternative of care available with hospice that we reached out to your publication for a monthly column devoted to hospice awareness.

We are grateful for the Observer & Eccentric acceptance of our efforts on behalf of those who are living with dying and their families. We will do our best to provide quality information to your readers. You're so right — "someone in their family may need it someday."

I must add a personal note of gratitude for your encouragement to volunteer. It is the competent, trained, and dedicated volunteer that makes the hospice program possible.

Nora J. Anderson,  
executive director  
Hospice Services of  
Western Wayne County

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