

# Opinion

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

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O&amp;E Thursday, September 22, 1988

## Impressions

### Concerns dog bond-vote trail

**I**N THE aftermath of voters rejecting Farmington Public Schools' bid to sell bonds to finance \$27.25 million in planned capital improvements, these thoughts linger:

• Make no mistake — we oppose squandering taxpayer money. But to brand all special elections wasteful is shortsighted.

Monday, voters rejected a bond proposal that would have brought a new westside elementary, a new westside early childhood center and districtwide safety improvements.

The result notwithstanding, the school board wasn't off base in slating a special election instead of waiting until the next annual district election in June.

Bond approval was needed now if the new elementary was to be ready by September 1990. That two-year target was set in response to overcrowded classrooms and long bus rides for many youngsters.

The special election's cost — \$5,200 in a district with a \$74 million budget — was incidental in contrast to the serious overcrowding in many aging elementarys. For many students, "relief" from cramped conditions has come in the form of long bus rides to less-crowded schools.

Trustees opted to gauge sentiment about bonding to address that arrangement, as well as districtwide safety needs, as quickly as possible — and we can't fault them for that. Bonding would have been an equitable route.

Monday's voter turnout was only 5 percent. But waiting until next June wouldn't have necessarily inspired more voters. Despite 52,000 registered voters, the district has drawn turnouts of 2 percent or less in each of its last five elections.

• When the school board first proposed \$7 million in bonds for a new westside elementary and an early childhood center and another \$20 million in bonds to tackle districtwide safety needs, we urged two separate ballot issues.

That would have provided a clearer reading of community wishes and allowed voters wary of

one request to still support the other.

The combined ballot issue makes it impossible to pinpoint what voters rejected. The new school buildings? The safety improvements? Both?

The combined ballot issue also makes it impossible to measure the influence of Farmington Hills insurance executive Richard Hendler, who called for building a new school with district cash reserves instead of through a voted bond issue.

• No, they didn't violate the letter of the Open Meetings Act. But they did stretch its spirit.

A quorum of the school board showed up Sept. 15 at an informational session with homeowners in the 11 Mile-Halsted area, site of the proposed new elementary.

The session, at Longacre Elementary, was called so that the school board could detail plans for neighbors near the site and answer their questions. We expected an administrator or two and a school board member or two to be on hand.

Instead, five of the seven trustees on the school board showed up. What was supposed to be a forum for school officials and a few residents could have been interpreted as a school board meeting held without proper public notice.

The trustees weren't trying to deceive anyone. They didn't deliberate or take a vote. But their assembly nonetheless fell into one of the gray areas influenced by the Open Meetings Act.

School trustees have many things in common. But what they have most in common is their school board service. So whenever they assemble, it's natural to assume school-related topics will crop up.

Besides, given that a quorum of their school board was to be at Longacre to discuss plans for a new elementary in particular and the related bond proposal in general, all district residents should have been apprised of the forum.

In the spirit of the Open Meetings Act, we think the school board should have called a special meeting, taken minutes and publicized the informational session to its entire constituency.

## Voter apathy

### Electoral system needs a boost

**V**OTER TURNOUT is a national disgrace. But while we applaud the many groups working to boost voter turnout this election year, we also believe changes need to be made in our electoral system for turnout to increase substantially.

What can be done? For starters, limits should at least be considered for incumbents' terms. Let's face it, unless a major scandal erupts, most incumbents are almost assured near-lifetime return to office if they make it through their first re-election bid.

But why stop there? There's merit in removing party labels, at least for some state and local elections. Most of election districts are one-party districts. George Washington probably couldn't get elected as a Democrat in most Oakland County communities — the same holds true for Wayne County and Republicans. Removing party labels would assure voters that the two strongest candidates would square off in the fall, while know-nothing, do-nothing types wouldn't be allowed to slide through just because they carried the "right" party designation.

**We encourage all eligible voters to go to the polls this year. And we also encourage them to go home and think about what it would take to keep them coming back.**

**SHORTENING** the increasingly lengthy — and costly — election season, could also be beneficial. In this high-tech media age, candidates often spend more time fund raising than debating the issues. Shortening the time between the primary and general election is an idea whose time may also have come.

We're not saying these are the best, or only, answers. But they are a start.

It's time for all of us to begin paying more than lip service to boosting voter turnout. Turnout for national elections is grim. Two out of every five registered voters failed to cast ballots in the 1984 general election. That same year, one in 10 eligible Michigan voters didn't even bother to register.

And that was for a presidential election. Those figures don't begin to take into account the many local council and school board elections where only one in 10 voters even goes to the polls.

We're not the only ones who see voter apathy as a threat.

Groups as diverse as the American Bar Association, Holiday Inns Inc. and MTV, the cable music video channel, are promoting voter education and registration.

That's fine, as far as it goes. Increasingly, however, we're beginning to believe the problem lies as not as much with the voting public as with our electoral system.

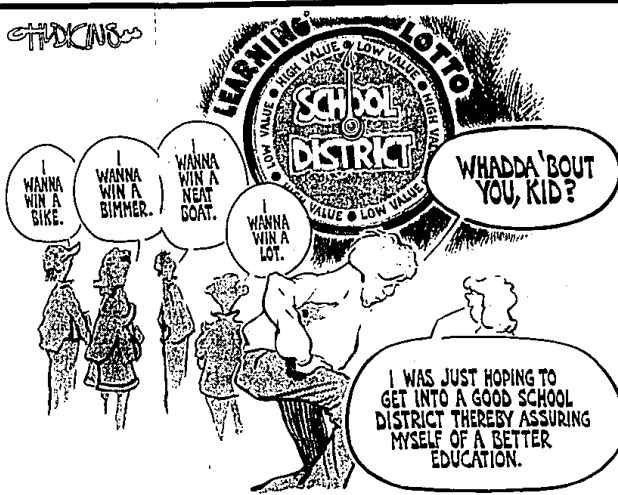
People will take the time to vote, we believe, if they're given something to vote for.

**VIBRANT**, vigorously contested elections are that reason. They are the life blood of any democratic system. They are the best assurance issues will be fully debated, incumbents' records will be fully scrutinized and challengers will fully provide us with their plans for change.

For too long, however, that life blood has been drained from our electoral system.

Most elections are over even before the balloting begins. Entrenched incumbents too often face only token challengers, if any at all.

We encourage all eligible voters to go to the polls this year. And we also encourage them to go home and think about what it would take to keep them coming back.



## Cysticfibrosis victim

### left endearing imprint

A YOUNGSTER died 12 days ago. But it isn't as if her memory ill fade.

The endearing 12-year-old is a legacy of dignity and values that led her age. As cystic fibrosis took its toll, she never lost her wit, smile or laugh.

"She gave us the strength to go on without her," Farmington Hills resident Lynne Pearce said about her daughter, Kristie.

The Farmington Rocket cheerleader died peacefully, in her mother's arms, surrounded by her loving family.

That's the way she wanted it. She had come home very ill from Bainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, a national cystic fibrosis research and treatment center in Cleveland, less than two months before she would have left her family.

With her family's help, Kristie valiantly fought the genetic disease which produces a thick, sticky build-up of mucus in the lungs, airway and digestive system.

SO WHEN Kristie could fight no more, it was fitting she felt the warmth of her mom plus her dad, Randy, her identical twin sister, Kim, and her brothers, Brett, 13, and Bradley, 5.

Always bubbly — despite the mucus-fighting clapping sessions, diet, supplements, medications and physical therapy — Kristie thrived



Bob Sklar

when cheering on Rockets football, part of an independent league.

A charmer with blue eyes and curly locks, Kristie would've been a seventh grader this fall at East Middle School. Outgoing, she always cared about the well-being of others, no matter how sick she may have felt.

"As much as we'll miss her, as sad as it'll be, we realize it would've been selfish to hold on to her at this point," her mom said the day before Kristie was buried in her Rockets uniform.

She was not able to do any of the things she wanted to do. She had been struggling so since June."

WITTY AND upbeat, Kristie touched a lot of lives and instilled a lot of love.

"She put things in perspective — about material things and personal disappointments. She had no self-pity," her mom said.

Kristie was a shining example for Kim and Brett.

In 1982, the three shared the spotlight as the Cystic Fibrosis Founda-

tion's national poster children. Kim and Brett are still healthy enough to attend school and enjoy activities.

CF is often called a hidden killer because patients don't show much of an outward sign that they're not as healthy as their playmates.

That's why the Pearces thrust their children into the spotlight — to spread understanding and inspire support.

As Lynne once told the Observer: "They are marvelous examples of life that needs to be preserved. That's why it's so important that we work as hard as we can to raise funds for research. I want to show them off so people will be moved to ask, 'What is this disease?'"

**RAINBOW HAS** established a trust fund for CF research as scientists approach discovery of the defective gene responsible for the disease, which occurs once in every 2,000 births.

The family suggests contributing to the Children's Lung Foundation, 1233 E. 172nd St., Cleveland, Ohio 44119.

Shortly before Kristie died, she told her family: "I'll be there with you, no matter where you go."

But her family won't be the only ones lucky enough to carry with them the memory of Kristie Pearce.

She'll also be in the thoughts of countless others whom she touched and who sought to touch her in her brief, but fulfilling life.

## 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. Letter should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit the. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

### Kind hearts are praised

To the editor:

Farmington residents should be given a "Kindest Heart Award."

After my letter to you, that the evening, the Bysters children came to see me, with gay-colored drawings. They were Robert, age 2; Joseph, Eric, 3; Amber, 8, and Van, 10.

They gave me a copy of the per and I was told by their mother, bin, that they would keep writing me.

Early the next morning, Sydney Chadek, received a call from a Mrs. Swartz, offering her service as volunteer, followed by several other calls offering their services.

That day, we all wore big smiles. About 50 or our patients have Alzheimer's disease, which is very hard to understand.

It's strange, but all seem to respond to music, which I play for them all Labor Day weekend.

Judy's Flowers of Novi send flowers each month. Yet, there is someone that needs to be done. I'd like to see some group put on a picnic for them before the cold winter sets in.

And please do remember our volunteers are needed. Trays are passed out at noon, then rain

around 5 p.m. Aides must sometime leave a bed patient to go to pass out trays and would welcome some help.

For those who wrote me, they will be hearing from me very soon. I am grateful.

Just to show your readers what a small thing can do, for Labor Day, I made 75 bows to put in patients' hair. It put a special glow into our dining room. God loves those who help another.

Margaret McClain 23-Z, Williamsburg Care Center, 21017 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills 48024

### Courtesy titles are indeed fair

To the editor:

I am writing regarding Casey Hans' column Sept. 1.

It is not "progressive" to eliminate courtesy titles in the name of "good writing." It is a simple civility that should be extended to everyone.

I would not want to be referred to by only my last name by a newspaper, by you, or by anyone else.

Also, I do not understand your view regarding the inequality of using such titles: she has a title, he has a title. What could be more fair?

I'm wondering why you have taken such issue with this relatively un-

important matter. Are you insecure about your own gender or marital status? Or was it a slow day in the newsroom and you had nothing bigger and better to pursue?

Marjorie E. Lent, Farmington Hills

### Media unfairly hounds Quayle

To the editor:

The article by Steve Barnaby on Dan Quayle's military service was a classic liberal hatchet job.

No where in the article is there any mention of Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, James Blanchard, or Tom Hayden, all Democratic politicians who avoided military service during the Vietnam War.

I would remind Mr. Barnaby that it was the National Guard that was called to duty to put down the riots in the late '60s when his "liberal" friends were looting and burning cities. We were happy to see the National Guard then, weren't we?

As one who served two years in the U.S. Army during the Korean War (one year in Korea itself), I can find no fault with Sen. Quayle's military service.

Leonard Kawocki, Farmington Hills

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