

# Opinion

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

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## Home day care Faxon's bills are too liberal

**T**HERE'S SOME merit to state Sen. Jack Faxon's package of bills that would override local zoning and permit home day care in residential areas.

Let's be honest: many folks want no part of home day care in single-family subs. They argue it's a business use of residential property — notwithstanding that baby-sitting clearly is a residential characteristic.

Faxon based his bills on the view that home day care is a necessary service, given that half of all mothers with preschool children are in the work force.

"We need to allow these day care providers to operate without fear of breaking their local zoning laws, and operate in such a way that their communities accept them," the Farmington Hills Democrat said.

But even though we've long held that family day care homes of six children or less should be allowed anywhere in a single-family sub, and even though we've not seen documentation that properly managed group day care homes of up to 12 children create a hardship for neighbors, we're not ready to strip local communities of the right to reasonably regulate such homes.

So we oppose Senate Bills 687-689, which passed the upper chamber in September and are before the House Social Services and Youth Committee.

**WE DON'T** buy the argument that if the state doesn't step in, like it had to with adult foster care homes, day care homes would never be permitted in residential areas.

Consider Farmington Hills. After months of hearings, the city council last year allowed family day care homes within subs and limited group day care homes to main roads. It gave two women who run group day care homes within subs a two-year extension so that concerns about noise, operating hours, parking and traffic could be monitored.

That compromise of a sensitive issue hardly flies in the face of irresponsibility. The state requires family day care homes to be registered, which subjects them to at least one inspection, and group day care homes to be licensed, which subjects them to periodic inspections. Farmington Hills also requires day care homes to be inspected by the fire department.

Faxon argues that home day care operators who seek licensing from the state could discover they're breaking the law in their community and be forced "underground."

By exempting home day care from local zoning, however, Faxon's bills would open a Pandora's box for local officials.

**THE EXTREMES** are readily apparent.

There will be the small, community-minded homes where residents leave a few children with a grandmotherly neighbor. There also will be day care providers who use their home to cut down on overhead when they really should be renting commercial space.

In our view, local control gives local officials 'home rule' leverage in monitoring the number, density and operation of day care homes — particularly more problem-prone group day care homes.

We have no argument with Faxon's premise that the Legislature hasn't given the emerging issue of day care the attention it deserves.

But eroding the power of local officials — the people on the firing line when problems pop up — simply isn't the answer.

The issue isn't children, Senator Faxon. It's the right of a local community to self-govern.

We haven't seen disregard for the right of home day care to exist in residential areas. So we're not prepared to support the state in usurping local control.

## Many go hungry

### How you can help this season

**W**HEN THANKSGIVING comes around this time next week, there will be one slice of life tough to swallow. That's because hundreds of thousands of people in Wayne and Oakland counties won't have a decent meal.

A Hunger Task Force recently reported that 673,000 area people go without food every month.

Coping with the problem is a network of emergency and other special food programs, which is unable to keep up with the demand despite a well-organized distribution system.

**IN WAYNE** County outside of Detroit, 63 emergency food pantries are able to serve each month only 11,700 of those who need help, according to the Southeastern Michigan Food Coalition. In Oakland County, 68 groups average service each month to just 15,250 people.

Being poor during times of abundance or in areas of affluence can be especially trying, according to those who deal with the hungry on a daily basis.

One human services professional recalled the case of a young, working couple who just had a baby but couldn't afford formula.

It's not just bellyaching or an isolated case. Jim Maey of the Food Bank of Oakland County said a couple can work a 70-hour week and still fall below the poverty level.

For those on public assistance — and they're throughout the metropolitan area — food stamps provide three weeks worth of food in a four-week month, he added.

**PERHAPS THE** cruellest fact of all is the way emergency food service providers were left hanging for promised federal commodities like butter and cheese, only to find them cut back and delivered erratically.

"Politicians aren't saying boo about that well-kept secret," said Gene Gonyea of the Gleaners Food Bank.

A new Hunger Emergency Relief Act may stabilize the situation in 1989, but officials don't expect the amount of federal relief to reach previous efforts.

Faced with high demand during the holidays, area food banks are girding for the task, keeping a wary eye on what will happen when stores are depleted after the holidays.

But this is one problem that everyone can have a hand in solving. Civic and religious organizations throughout metropolitan Detroit are sponsoring drives for food and donations. Here are some of the larger programs:

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• The Boy Scouts have 400 units from the Detroit Area, Clinton Valley and Wolverine councils going door-to-door from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, collecting canned goods and dry food stuffs. The program is being conducted in cooperation with the WXYZ-Channel 7 Can Do program.

Scouts will turn the collections in at Elias Brothers Restaurants, which will distribute the donations to food banks, according to Jerry Landorf, assistant director of field services for the Boy Scouts. Those missing the Scouts on Saturday can take their donations directly to the restaurant.

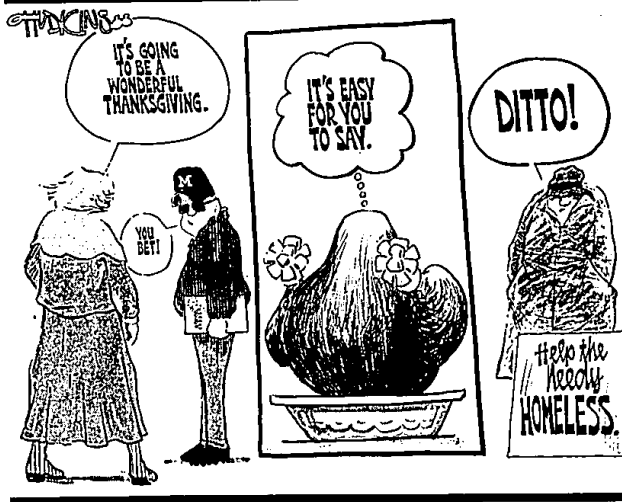
• In Wayne County's Plymouth and Canton areas, Omnicom Cable Television and the Salvation Army will have a television on Saturday, Dec. 10, for their "baskets filled with love" campaign. Viewers will be asked to bring canned goods to the station. The army's social worker, Heather Doherty, said boxes also are placed in local stores, schools and businesses.

• In Oakland County, the 12th annual Light-house Thanksgiving food basket distribution project is under way. Last year baskets were provided to 1,236 families. Volunteers, food and money are needed. Call 335-2462 or write the agency at 109 Williams Street, P.O. Box 405, Pontiac 48056.

• For those who wish to get in contact with an emergency food pantry, call the Southeastern Michigan Food Coalition at 963-4230.

• A major food drive this year is being conducted at five supermarket chains through the area. The stores are Kroger, Farmer Jack, Foodland, Great Scott and A&P. Food suppliers offer special products to shoppers who may buy them at reduced prices for donation or for taking home. The collection will run throughout the holiday season.

That brief list shows the variety of opportunities to make these holidays fulfilling ones for you — and for emergency pantries.



## Take in historic sites during Sunday drive

**NO DOUBT** about it: A leisurely Sunday afternoon drive really does give a fresh perspective on Farmington Hills, a booming suburb that has never lost sight of its historical roots.

Historical markers dot the roadside. They provide a telling peek into our community's storied past.

Here's a sampling:

• The Botsford Inn, Grand River, north of Eight Mile. It's Michigan's oldest inn still providing food and lodging. Orrin Weston built it as a home in 1838. In 1841, Stephen Jennings converted it to a tavern. In 1860, Milton C. Botsford acquired it. At one time, it was known as the Sixteen Mile House because of its proximity to downtown Detroit along the Old Post Road (now Grand River). Henry Ford, who first saw it while courting his future wife, Clara, in a horse and buggy, bought the inn from the Botsfords in 1924 and restored it. The Fords sold it to the Ansh Hotels Co. in 1951.

• Freedom Acres, 11 Mile, east of Orchard Lake Road. For more than a century, descendants of slaves who fled the south before the Civil War lived on the five-acre farm. Aaron and Ellen Wilson came from Virginia to Farmington via the Underground Railroad in the



**Bob Sklar**

early 1830s. They secured their freedom in Canada, where they became citizens. After the war, they made their home in Farmington, "where the people had been so friendly." Here, four generations were respected members of the community — the only black family in Farmington. Claude Wilson, a grandson, was Oakland County's first black sheriff. Wellington Hullum was known for years as Pete the TV Man.

• Royal Aldrich House, across from Freedom Acres. Royal Aldrich built the two-story Greek Revival farmhouse, where farm animals can still be seen, in 1840. The Farmington, N.Y., native's father had bought the 320-acre farm from the U.S. government in 1823. The house retains much of its clapboard siding, interior woodwork, doors and hardware. It is supported by 16-inch walnut beams and a cobblestone foundation.

• Philbrick Tavern, 11 Mile and

Power. In the 1830s and '40s, Nathan Philbrick's tavern was known for the quality of its entertainment for weary travelers. It also served as a meeting place for Farmington Township's early government. In the 1850s, according to local legend, the hotel possibly served as a station on the Underground Railroad, helping escaped slaves en route to Canada.

• Longacre House, Farmington Road, north of 10 Mile. It's now the Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills. The earliest part of the Georgian manor house dates back to 1689, when farmer Palmer Sherman built it. Lumen Goode, a prominent Detroit attorney, acquired it in 1915. The six-foot-high stone wall was built in 1917. In 1969, Goodenough heirs gave the house and five surrounding acres to the Farmington area for a community center.

• 13 Mile, west of Drake. Attractive wood-etched markers let motorists know they're entering the Thirteen Mile Historic Area, home to six houses built between 1830 and 1870.

• Minnow Pond, 14 Mile, east of Halsted. The lush valley and the wetlands at the bottom of it have been around since retreat of the last ice; sheet 12,000 years ago. For centuries, it was an Indian campsite.

## 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.

### Lobbyist tells about charge

To the editor: I understand that Oakland County commissioner David Moffitt's opponent suggested that the county should have a Washington representative.

My letter hopefully describes my activities as Oakland County's legislative representative in Washington, D.C.

Over the past several years, the county has been involved with a number of Washington, D.C., issues. For example, U.S. Customs Service at the Oakland-Pontiac Airport, highway funding at Walton Boulevard and numerous other road projects throughout the county, housing and community development programs, urban development action grants for Pontiac and Hazel Park, Superfund Community Right-to-know legislation etc.

Recently at a meeting at the White House concerning urban affairs, a number of county commissioners, including Mr. Moffitt, expressed Oakland County's concerns about shortfalls in federal highway funding for rapidly growing suburban areas.

We are currently working on highway funding shortages through the National Association of Counties where Dan Murphy is a key player.

In the next session of Congress, we are hopeful that serious attention

will be given to changing outmoded and outdated federal highway allocations.

In conclusion, progress is sometimes measured in small increments. From a Washington, D.C., perspective, Oakland County is attempting to secure measurable results.

Thomas J. Bulger,  
Oakland County,  
Washington representative

### School called 'high quality'

To the editor:

Having recently moved to Farmington Hills from a small town in northern Michigan, where I considered the school system to be excellent, I was somewhat apprehensive about enrolling my daughter in a "big city" school.

Recently, I attended my daughter's first open house at O.E. Dunkel Middle School in Farmington Hills. The school was neat and clean. The teachers were high quality, concerned individuals who took time to explain to parents the various subject material covered in each class, what was expected of the students, the textbooks being used, the grading procedures, etc.

The Farmington school board and the faculty of O.E. Dunkel Middle School have a great deal to be proud of. I thank you for providing such a high quality education.

Shirley L. Hess,  
Farmington Hills

### Edition is a keepsake

To the editor: The 100th anniversary edition was exceptionally well-done, and I wish to tender my congratulations.

This will become a keepsake long to be treasured by many, many Farmingtonians.

We depend on the Observer to keep the tone and heritage of Farmington alive and glowing in the hearts of our citizens.

Jean Fox,  
Farmington Hills

### Coverage is wasted space

To the editor: I am filled with dismay and chagrin upon viewing your first and second page spread and picture (Oct. 27) concerning the recent board meeting of Farmington Village and the disagreement regarding the planting at the corner of Nine Mile and Gill.

To waste first-page print on such a trivial incident is rather unbelievable to me.

I am a resident of Farmington Village and happened to be in attendance at said meeting; and while there was some exchange of opinions, what are meetings for if not that? But again, a front page spread? And again, what a waste.

Shirley Dulso,  
Farmington Hills

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