

Opinion

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

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Traffic panel

Consider one for Farmington

MAYBE FARMINGTON does need a traffic commission, as suggested by the Old Village Association.

"I'd give it some further consideration," councilman Ralph Yoder said after the OVA suggested such a commission Nov. 7.

Right on, Mr. Yoder.

The OVA represents historic district homeowners, who last December complained to the city council that speeding, noise and cut-through traffic were their biggest quality-of-life threats.

Eleven months and a professional study later, the city is pursuing two of the OVA's six recommendations: a traffic light at Shilwassee and Farmington Road and a speed limit study on Grand River.

Other recommendations would limit through traffic on Shilwassee, bar through traffic on side streets and limit parking on Grand River — none of which we'd favor without more definitive study.

But we don't buy councilman Bill Hartsock's argument that engineering consultants can supply whatever answers the city doesn't have in shaping traffic control strategy.

A traffic commission no doubt would be another useless bureaucratic layer if its thrust was to undercut the city administration and public safety department. But we don't think that's what the OVA has in mind.

AS ENVISIONED, a traffic commission would be an advisory panel representing the city council, the Downtown Development Authority, the public safety department and residents at large.

Its mission would be to anticipate traffic problems as well as field traffic complaints. It would provide research and analytical support.

Commissioners, in short, would cast an eagle eye toward the environment — from a traffic perspective.

One of its charges might be to make temporary traffic-pattern adjustments to test their impact before final decisions are made.

Granted, traffic tieups downtown might be

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caused by ongoing or planned improvements to Drake, I-696, Haggerty and Orchard Lake Road.

But Mayor Dick Tupper unwittingly gave as strong a reason as any for a traffic commission.

In response to the OVA's recommendation to bar Grand River traffic from turning left onto Shilwassee, he said: "We just don't want to shift the problem from Shilwassee over to someplace else."

That's the kind of concern a traffic commission could delve into — working, of course, with the engineering consultants.

AS OVA president Frank Reid put it: "There are lots of changes on local and adjacent roadways. It'd be very good to have a sitting body keeping track of some of those changes, identifying and perhaps proposing changes ahead of when a problem might occur."

We've never understood why Farmington's two bypasses, Freedom Road and M-102, are so poorly marked and hard to reach. They're virtually useless as bypasses. A traffic commission could work toward reversing that.

Hartsock acknowledged that as nearby arteries are improved, the effect on the entire city of Farmington will have to be measured. A traffic commission could tackle that job.

Commission findings would still face the scrutiny of the city administration. The city council would still have ultimate say.

We urge Tupper to participate on an idea exchange to gauge sentiment for a traffic commission. A grass-roots forum would be invaluable in deciding whether a commission could be effective in addressing quality-of-life threats for everyone who calls Farmington home.

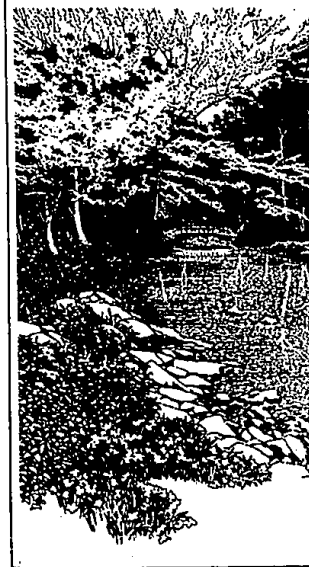
Environment

Voters want it clean and green

FOR TOO long now, the environment has been one of the great lip-service issues on most political agendas. Candidates for everything from the state House to the presidency this fall embraced the environment the way people approach a daily weather forecast: talk is fine, but action isn't really necessary.

We had president-elect George Bush for example, tossing off one-liners about his Massachusetts opponent's answers being so murky they were "about as clear as Boston Harbor." Yet this is the same candidate who, as vice president, was a front man for the Reagan Administration's opposition to the Clean Water Act.

BUT MICHIGAN voters this month sent a message to Lansing and to Washington. In passing Proposals C and D by overwhelming margins,



Overwhelming approval of Proposals C and D should send a message to Lansing and Washington.

they are saying it's time for elected officials to put our money where their mouths are.

Proposal C, which won approval from just about three out of every four voters, authorized the state to borrow up to \$660 million for programs that will clean up toxic waste sites and other environmental contamination. The measure also calls for contributing to a regional Great Lakes protection fund and addresses issues of sewage and solid waste.

Its passage should help the Rouge River cleanup effort, a campaign which until now has often had to rely more heavily on community spirit than cash. River cleanup projects could receive as much as \$70 million in Proposal C-related funds, according to one official's estimate last week.

That money, coupled with federal grants announced last month totaling nearly \$35 million, will go at least part of the way toward footling a bill that is expected to reach \$500 million.

PROPOSAL D authorizes Michigan to borrow \$140 million for state and local recreation projects, including repair and redevelopment of state parks. It was approved by a more than 2-to-1 margin.

This is especially good news for Wayne County, where constant financial woes have all but gutted the parks and recreation department budget.

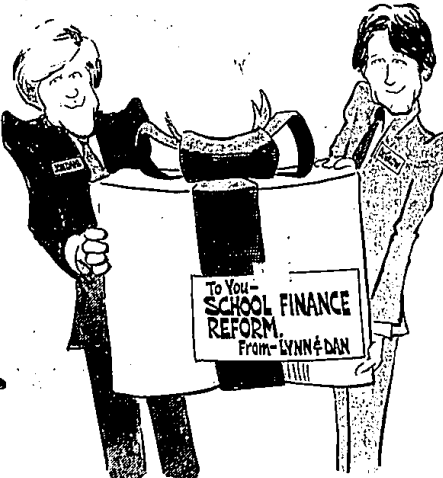
True, the proposals were easy to support because neither will mean an immediate increase in taxes.

It is apparent though — from the comfortable margins favoring each proposal — that the environment has become a priority issue for voters. The connection between healthy, clean surroundings and the quality of life has been made.

Pollution is no longer something to be tolerated for the sake of convenience. Or because our money should be used to address other problems first.

We hope elected officials will adjust their priorities too. Continued programs addressing the state of our natural resources are a necessity. That is the mandate they have been handed through Proposals C and D.

HACKING



Board hopefuls should be publicly questioned

FARMINGTON HILLS City Council has the power to fill the vacancy when one of its members resigns.

But councilman Aldo Vagnozzi hit the bull's eye in saying pains should be taken to assure a decision isn't made before the full state of applicants is in.

I sense some council members already have a favorite to succeed Jan Dolan, who becomes our new state representative Jan. 1. And that's too bad.

The five early applicants — planning commissioners Philip Arnold and Jonathan Grant, zoning board members Richard Corey and Lawrence Lichtman and Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills officer Martin Krohner — all sport solid civic credentials. But back: the deadline for applications, Dec. 6, was just set last week.

I agree with Mayor Judy Soronen that Dolan's successor will likely be someone with demonstrated interest in city government — "probably somebody who over the years has shown interest by participating on a board or commission, by attendance at our meetings or in some fashion along those lines."



Bob Sklar

BUT I'm leery of motives after Soronen, Mayor-elect Terry Sever and councilman Joe Alkateeb scuttled Vagnozzi's suggestion that applicants formally appear before the council.

Vagnozzi suggested that each applicant submit a resume, make a short presentation, then answer questions at a council meeting.

Even if a dozen applicants appear for five minutes, the screening process would take only an hour.

The council then would be ready for a vote based on a face-to-face exchange, not just resumes and impressions.

"Most of us have a pretty good idea of who the final four is going to be," Sever said.

Why have 20 people show up, then have to console 16 people you know aren't even in the running? he asked.

Sever prefers letting council members make nominations from among the applicants. But that doesn't provide much room for face-to-face evaluation. Sever's way may be more direct, but Vagnozzi's is fairer.

A FORMAL give-and-take just might provide the insight a wavering council member needs to size up an applicant.

The time to scrutinize credentials is during the screening process, not the nomination process.

Given the power of incumbency, the city council would be derelict if it lets personal favorites for the opening council seat blind them to other legitimate, and maybe even better qualified, applicants.

Maybe the early applicants are the best and the brightest. But maybe not.

The council should discard preconceptions and give all who apply by Dec. 6 an equal shot before picking finalists.

In that scenario, the final four could be a bit different than how Sever perceives it.

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.

Remember joy from garden

To the editor:

The garden at the corner of Nine Mile and Gill has been sodded over. Hundreds of people, both residents of Farmington Village and other people passing by, loved the garden.

Well, the garden has one distinction! It is the only annual garden in the state of Michigan to be obliterated because it refuses to be colorful in December.

I paid for the garden. I dragged hoses three times a week to water the garden during the drought. I hoed, plucked and pulled weeds. I sent letter after letter trying to save the garden. I offered a compromise of some sod and some flowers and even submitted drawings which would satisfy anyone.

Please remember the beauty and love we all shared last summer. I am sorry this exquisite gift from nature will exist no more. I truly gave this struggle my best effort.

Elizabeth Hatton, Farmington Hills

Help praised, and is needed

To the editor:

Your readers are so very special. I've tried to keep up with the mail. But we only have \$33 a month to get by on. All personal needs must come out of that. So stamps aren't all that easy to come by.

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor
Susan Rosiek assistant managing editor
Dick Isahm general manager
Richard Brady director of advertising
Fred Wright director of circulation

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Please let me tell you about just a few.

There is Lila. She works in the downtown area. We sit and watch for her arrival two times a week. On Sundays, she is here five hours, talking to patients in the dining room and the day room, cheering them when families don't come. That is mostly all the time, yet many live nearer than she does. It would take a ream of paper just to tell all she means to us.

There is Barbara, a school teacher, who comes every Thursday with news of what's new on the outside. Then there is my own very special daughter, who, if she were able (she is far from well) would be here daily. Often, she arrives with beautiful cakes. She takes patients to the telephone and does many other little things that aides do not have time to do.

Also, there is a lovely young lady who works at the nursing home in Farmington. I call her the "cookies lady." And there's Susan, with the special letters and little gifts.

And the Farmington Hills Salvation Army. I just can't believe all that L.L. and Mrs. J. Rich do for all of us here.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church — they had all of us that could go out for a beautiful luncheon. They come here once a month for an evening of fun. They see that I get birthday cards so I can remember all the patients on their special day.

Judy's of Novi, who provided the beautiful flowers. Nancy, at the Narden Park United Methodist Church, who is trying to get Christmas cards for me to give each patient.

It sounds like a lot and believe me it is. But please don't think we are

getting enough.

All days are so long and lonely. God bless you all.

Margaret McClain,
Williamsburg Care Center,
Farmington Hills

Thank you for chipping in

To the editor:

Congratulations on your award from the Farmington Beautification Committee. The Observer's efforts were certainly deserving of recognition.

The fact that so many of the awards went to downtown businesses is a source of pride to the entire downtown business community.

On behalf of the Downtown Development Authority board of directors, our thanks for doing your part to keep Farmington beautiful.

Wendy Strip Sittsamer,
DDA executive director
Farmington

Stories very appreciated

To the editor:

We have been so pleased with all the wonderful press Loraine McClish has been kind enough to give the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation this year, from the planning stages of our annual Evening of Brilliance gala right on through the event itself.

Annette Kolon,
Juvenile Diabetes Foundation
Southfield