

# Opinion

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O&E Thursday, July 27, 1989

## End gridlock Best plan for Haggerty — 4A

**H**AGGERTY ROAD is more than just a two-lane county road. Its presence in fast-growing west Oakland County controls the lives of many who travel it.

The best solution proposed by the state to the peak-drive-time gridlock on Haggerty seems to be the so-called Alternative 4A.

Some say the problem isn't that bad. One group of area residents, Concerned Citizens for West Bloomfield, argues that no solution is needed, since it's better to deal with traffic jams than put up with the new business, industry and homes bound to follow any kind of improvement to the corridor. Such overdevelopment will ruin the quality of life here, they say.

To an extent, we agree. Making roads flow more freely often opens the floodgates to more growth and development. But in this case, much of the urban sprawl came first, leaving Farmington Hills and its neighbors stuck with incredibly crowded roads. Hiding our heads in the sand won't stop the urban sprawl or make it go away. The way to control growth is through local planning and zoning boards — the way West Bloomfield activists did to slow development.

**THE MICHIGAN** Department of Transportation says traffic on Haggerty already is far too much for the road. "Without improvements," a state report said, "complete breakdown of the system is anticipated." That's strong stuff.

Most area residents apparently agree, if the turnout at MDOT's public hearing last month was any indication. More than 800 people showed up to express an opinion; a normal turnout is 35-40. That shows the problem can't be ignored. People want it resolved.

Alternative 4A calls for a multi-lane, north-south road approximately a quarter mile west of Haggerty to link Pontiac Trail with the I-96/I-696/I-275 interchange. It's the cheapest alternative, at \$72 million, and it disturbs the fewest residences, at 28. Only four businesses would be

*Hiding our heads in the sand won't stop the urban sprawl or make it go away.*

displaced, one more than under another, more costly plan.

Of course, it's easy for communities like West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills to support Alternative 4A, since it moves the wider roadway out of their back yard and puts it next door, through Novi and Commerce Township. West Bloomfield has consistently opposed any extension of Northwestern Highway through its boundaries. But Farmington Hills has borne the effects of another north-south freeway, I-275.

**EVER SINCE** MDOT's latest plan came out in a May environmental impact statement, rumors have circulated about the full north/south route from I-96 to M-59. That route, called M-9, is the ultimate solution to gridlock on Haggerty.

MDOT hasn't said whether the Haggerty Road connector will be the eventual route of M-9. That concerns us because there seems to be lack of a commitment from MDOT to build anything north of Pontiac Trail, its 10-year plan notwithstanding.

We're also concerned about the effect the connector will have on sensitive wetlands and on the narrow roads that'll cross it, particularly Pontiac Trail.

Meanwhile, the connector will do nothing to ease traffic on Haggerty south of the freeway. Details of the 12 Mile interchange are too sketchy. And need persists for a left-turn lane on Haggerty.

Alternative 4A is the best short-term solution, but we can't stress enough that it'll only be a start to solving the near-crisis traffic problem on Haggerty Road.

## Loan co-signing Tri-party pact bad precedent

**CONSIDER IT** signed, sealed, delivered — and irrevocable. But that doesn't make it right. To the contrary, it reeks.

Farmington Hills had no business co-signing golf pro Al Marmion's \$250,000 bank loan to remodel the clubhouse and add a restaurant at the city-owned San Marino Golf Course.

Marmion manages and operates the nine-hole golf course and related facilities.

Councilwoman Jean Fox, who joined councilman Aldo Vagnozzi in opposing the co-signing, was right on when she said, "We're not a bank. We should not be financing private individuals who can't find collateral in other places. I just feel this is an unwise course for the city."

The issue isn't the 15-year golf pro's finances. Nor is it the seeming logic of having the landowner co-sign a loan to improve the clubhouse. Nor is it the steps the city says it took to protect against liability or default.

Bluntly put, Farmington Hills taxpayers just shouldn't co-sign a loan — for anybody.

## Abortion debate Other issues need our attention

**WITH THE** onslaught of the Michigan gubernatorial sweepstakes, voters can only hope there is more to political life in Michigan than the abortion issue.

Important, yes, but abortion shouldn't be the all to end all of political debate in the Wolverine state. Unfortunately, the danger exists that, with the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision giving states more latitude in limiting abortion rights, this very emotional issue will become the main focus of political debate.

Without a doubt, the pro-life forces will inundate candidates of all stripes with their litmus test of loyalty to their cause. And pro-choice forces will be forced to respond with equal fervor.

Neither politicians or abortion activists, pro or con, can be relied upon to keep the ship of state on an even keel.

**ONLY VOTERS**, those out of the mainstream of power and special interest, can be relied upon to maintain a balance in the upcoming debate. Only the reaction of voters can ensure that all

**DIDN'T** the city realize Marmion's shortfall in collateral from the start? Why was construction so far along before the city was asked to co-sign for a construction loan? Why did the city co-sign for the full loan amount instead of only the shortfall in collateral?

The city either should have remodeled and expanded the clubhouse itself or found someone with enough collateral to do so.

Complicating matters was the last-minute presentation of the tri-party, 20-year loan agreement — providing no time for the city council to digest the effects.

The agreement calls for the city to pay off the balance of the loan from Michigan National Bank if Marmion dies, becomes disabled or defaults. But views differ on the fallout if he defaults.

No one expects Marmion to walk away and forget his debt after 15 years of service to the city. He vows to not let the city down. But why should the city even be in a position of having to assume the risk and act as a loan bailout?

## Other issues need our attention

important issues will remain in focus. While a militant group of citizens does feel that abortion is the most important issue, others realize that this state's leaders must address an agenda of political concerns.

• The governor and Lansing lawmakers must resolve the dilemma of public education that is rapidly becoming a system of haves and have nots.

• A plan must be molded to aid our socially and economically wounded cities.

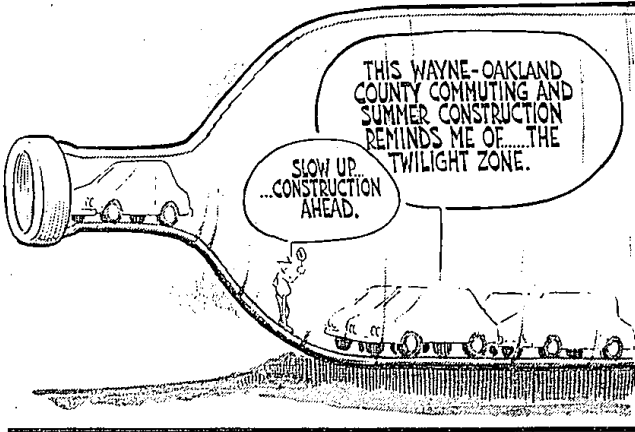
• The state must take a more active role in dealing effectively with the war on drugs.

• Highway expansion and repair must be sorted out before we are overwhelmed with clogged highways.

• Economic development still must be a number one concern of a state that still lags behind much of the rest of the nation in maintaining healthy employment figures. The list could go on. But as easily can be seen much more than the merits and demerits of abortion need to be discussed. The voters will decide if this is to be so.

THE CENSUS

## Bottleneck



## City council meetings should be on cable TV

**I WOULDN'T** go quite as far as councilman Paul Sowerby.

He said he'd support cablecasting Farmington Hills City Council meetings live, "whatever it costs."

But given the cost isn't prohibitive — and we'll know in August when city manager Bill Costick issues a report — I wholeheartedly support Sowerby in urging that the meetings be broadcast over MetroVision of Oakland County's cable Channel 12. "I think this is the way we get the message across," councilwoman Jean Fox said.

And she's right. Who's kidding who, anyway.

Aside from council watchers and people interested in a particular agenda item, few residents ever just "drop in" on a council meeting, notorious for lasting four hours. After working all day, residents are more apt to turn on the TV to find out what their elected officials are up to than trudge down to the city hall, particularly in winter.

**THE CITY'S** Committee to Increase Voter Participation thinks cablecasting the meetings not only will foster educated voting but also interest and participation in local government. "So many people have talked



Bob Sklar

about it. There's been a lot of talk and interest expressed in it," Costick said — an encouraging sign.

Cablecasting government meetings isn't new. MetroVision already tapes and shows selected local meetings, including candidate nights. The 13 metro cities that Farmington Hills video production supervisor Dave Tietmeyer found that cablecast council meetings live report "a larger viewing audience than first expected" — another encouraging sign.

"Many cities claim it is the most popular program on cable television. It provides instant communication between residents and the operations of city government," Tietmeyer said.

If the Farmington Hills council chamber's sight lines, as well as its microphone, audiovisual, lighting, video production and air circulation systems, prove accommodating, and

the cost is at all acceptable, I say: "Let the cameras roll!"

**SO RESIDENTS** aren't bored to tears, the city council should strive to shorten its seemingly interminable meetings.

I never cease to be amazed that council members seem to feel compelled to comment on each agenda item just for the sake of it. When they have nothing substantially new to add, they should cut discussion, call the vote, then move on. Do they really think anyone wants to hear hours of rambling debate?

I don't buy the argument the council and the audience will play to the camera as a general rule. Sure, some people might. But viewers aren't dumb. Longwindedness quickly becomes evident. And that political tactic is more apt to hurt than help a particular cause.

Meanwhile, shyness in front of the camera has a way of working itself out.

If the Farmington Hills City Council's sojourn into cablecasting proves positive, I'd urge the Farmington City Council to follow its neighbors' lead and cablecast its meetings live. Bob Sklar is editor of the Farmington Observer.

## Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

### Faxon's view off the mark

**To the editor:** This letter is in response to the July 6 article, "High court's ruling draws mixed views," in which state Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, is quoted as saying: "Pro-life people have always been very adamant. I think they should respect people's rights to make their own decisions and not impose their standards on other people."

Likewise, I do not like Sen. Faxon's standards imposed on me — that is the standard of tolerance, acceptance and permission to murder. On what standard is he basing his values?

Carol Markey, Farmington Hills

### Keep parade non-political

**To the editor:** On July 15, I attended the Founders Day Parade in Farmington. We were under the impression that local business people and clubs marched in the parade to promote the founding of the city.

Apparently, the Knights of Colum-

bus (St. Francis Council, Farmington Hills) don't know the reason for the parade. It is not a political forum. Their pro-life banner and large picture of a fetus had no place there.

I am also writing to the various city parade organizers. Let's keep the parade a celebration of the founding of a city.

J. Kasuboski, Farmington Hills

### Pro-life pitch — out of place

**To the editor:** This letter is to express our concern over the mixing of politics with the Founders Day Parade. In specific, the Knights of Columbus' streetwide banner stating support for anti-abortion. Compounding this was the rather tasteless picture of a fetus.

Not only was there an absence of a pro-choice display, but it violated the principle that community parades are to pull us together, not polarize us.

In the future, those responsible for the parade should screen entrants to prevent the mixing of controversy with fun.

Tom and Arlene Johnson, Farmington Hills

### Festival head offers thanks

**To the editor:** Thank you for the great coverage the Founders Festival was given this year. We depend greatly upon you to let the public know about our activities for the Founders Festival, and we were not disappointed.

Special thanks go to many others for their assistance during the 1989 festival, including Farmington's police and DPW and Farmington Hills' police, DPW and Special Services. The two cities' cooperation and assistance is a must to putting on a successful festival.

Our hard-working volunteers also deserve great praise: Delilah and Steve Tretnik, Eric Johnston, Jim Gural, Kent Nickel, Jon and Debbie Grant, Kathy Verstrate, Wendy and Murray Sitsamer, Cele Austin, Mary Avery, Bobbie Robinson, Rusty Soronen, the Farmington Radio Club and Russ Tuttle. The chamber's office staff, Judy Gural and Cheryl Zajdel, deserve silver medals for the months of hard work they put in on the Founders Festival.

With the cooperation of the weather, I think this was one of our finest festivals. I hope others feel the same.

Jody Soronen, administrator, Farmington/Farmington Hills Founders Festival

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