

## Opinion

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10A(P)

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## Open meetings

### Landfill shifts require scrutiny

IT'S UPSETTING THAT the procedures used by the appointed Oakland County Landfill Site Advisory Committee appear to be breaking down.

Flaws were found in that process after Highland and Oxford townships were named as likely landfill sites. That leaves the process open and exposed, and internal wrangling over where to put the landfill is likely to intensify.

Recalculation of criteria used to choose the former top two candidates, Oxford and Highland, replaced Highland with a second site on the border of Oxford and Addison townships.

In addition, the recalculations took place at a work session of the committee officers, county officials, consultants and officials of the affected townships — which was closed to the press. A reporter from the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers was asked to leave the room.

MUCH ADO was originally made of the broad-based committee and the integrity of the "blind-draw" process. Both were designed to avoid both politicizing and what has since become known as NIMBY — not in my backyard.

Originally, the full committee of Oakland County citizens chose a landfill site by giving numerical weights to certain qualities it would like to see in the landfill, the more important the quality — adequate drainage for example — the greater the numerical value.

Committee members never knew where the landfill would be; it was just their job to assign the values and scores and give those numbers to a consultant who would match-up their numbers with geographical locations likely to fulfill their requirements.

Discovery of the errors was confirmed by committee chairwoman Ardath Regan at the work-session session where she and three committee vice chairmen went over "every single figure there" with the consultants and the county.

A reporter was ousted from what turned out to

be a four-hour work session — so that process, no longer a blind draw, was not public.

TECHNICALLY, THE closing of the committee meeting which involved only its officers and consulting officials was allowable as defined by Michigan's Open Meetings Act.

However, it is questionable whether such important calculations should have been handled at a work-session session when you consider the public interest. Shouldn't a majority of the 25-member broad-based committee have been there for those important steps?

Oakland County is doing the right thing by laying plans for such a landfill site to take care of its future solid waste. At the same time, the communities and residents of those communities under consideration to house such a landfill should have full knowledge — including any internal wrangling.

The Michigan Open Meetings Act says a public body making decisions of public concern must meet publicly. The intent is to keep the public informed and prohibit decision-making bodies from cutting deals, out of the public spotlight, that aren't in the public's best interest.

Certainly, the removal of Highland Township from the second spot and the assurance that Oxford Township can't escape consideration — are decisions — which will soon be rubber stamped by the full committee.

THE LANDFILL Site Advisory Committee has been meeting since last February and has sent out regular press releases inviting the media to cover its meetings.

Complaints were heard that the press didn't always respond — interested, perhaps, more in results than process.

But, now, when the results are being revised, the public meeting becomes a work session. The press, interested in results, is now kept from the process. And the general public only knows what it is told.

## Driving drunk

### Penalty must be swift, certain

WE ARE MAKING some progress in the battle against drunk driving but we still have a long way to go.

As recently as 10 years ago, a professional athlete or local celebrity only added to his legend if the public found out he had been inebriated behind the wheel. The public didn't find out often, because police officers were inclined to let well-known offenders off with a "warning."

These days, such arrests are reported by the media, usually on the front page or at the top of the newscast. Reaction is negative, status of the person as a "role model" is questioned.

Judges are handing out stiffer penalties in drunk driving fatalities too.

Everyone, it seems, now believes driving under the influence of alcohol is a serious problem for society. Mothers Against Driving Drunk (MADD) and its spinoff organizations deserve much of the credit.

More needs to be done.

Those who doubt it ought to show up in their local district court any Monday morning. They will see a half-dozen or more young adults parade before the judge in plead on cases stemming from their arrest the previous weekend.

MOST ARE BETWEEN 18 and 25 years old. Many are repeat offenders.

## Alcohol ban

### U-M deserves praise, support

HAIL TO the victors.

No matter where your football sentiments rest, you've got to feel a bit of victory after the University of Michigan's declaration that alcohol is no longer welcome at the stadium.

We commend the university officials for taking steps to keep those more interested in getting drunk from ruining the enjoyment of those who come to watch the game.

Universities, especially, need to be beacons of leadership, to set the pace of American mores and lifestyle. Legions of intoxicated students paraded across the national television networks every Saturday has proved nothing short of ludicrous.

Alcohol abuse is no joke. It very simply is a murderous practice which must not be condoned by any responsible institution.

The university also is banning the practice of allowing patrons to leave the stadium to refresh themselves at the ongoing tailgate party in the parking lot.

**Alcohol abuse is no joke. It must not be condoned by any responsible institution.**

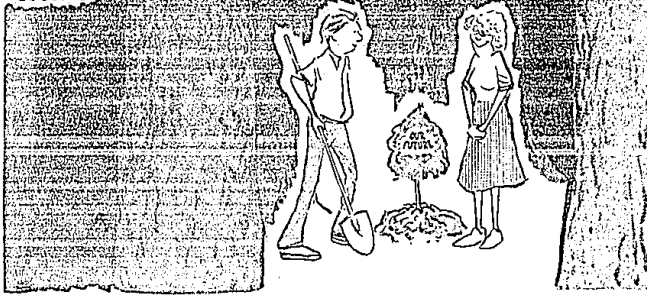
Some alumni and students are objecting. But to those who can only give a Bronx cheer.

The move by U-M to thwart those secreting alcoholic beverages into the stadium via various types of containers is a move recommended for other sporting arenas.

Frankly, we believe that alcohol is of little use at any sporting event — amateur or professional. Banning the suds completely would be more than commendable.

Perhaps team owners who fret over waning attendance would find a renewal of interest among fans long-departed, frustrated at competing with the din of a drunken crowd.

NEWS ITEM — ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR M.E.T. CONTRACTS ARE FROM OAKLAND COUNTY.



## Wetlands damage: Slap on wrist is not enough

I APPRECIATE developer Gidon Zaitz apologizing for his contractor, who mistakenly destroyed small trees and shrubs in the wetlands of a condominium complex under construction in Farmington Hills.

And I'm happy that neighbors are pleased with the West Bloomfield developer's plans to re-landscape the environmentally sensitive area, clearly off limits to the contractor, who apparently used it as a shortcut to the south property line.

Appearing before the Farmington Hills City Council last week, Zaitz made no excuses for the contractor's intrusion into the wetlands at Meadowridge Condominiums on Middlebelt at I-696.

Zaitz accepted responsibility, willingly boosted his landscaping budget by \$100,000 to help make amends and promised better supervision of all digging.

Elsewhere on the land, Zaitz has saved 100 trees in pursuit of what he calls a "first-class development." He's also carving out an oversized retention pond as a flood inhibitor.

But an apology is nothing more than a slap on the wrist.

What's more, the new plantings — 24-inch-tall winterberry and red twig dogwood — won't match the



Bob Sklar

lushness of what fell to the dozer for years. Make no mistake about that!

BECAUSE NEIGHBORS seemed "more than happy" with the restoration plan, Mayor Terry Sever, while calling the incident "unfortunate," wanted "to move on."

Sorry, Mr. Mayor. But it's not time "to move on" just yet. What choices did the neighbors have, anyway? The trees that stood in the dozer's path are now gone.

Wrongful toppling of trees simply can't be tolerated in a city that only seven months ago burst with pride over a new ordinance to protect trees.

Zaitz couldn't be cited under that tree protection ordinance because the Meadowridge project preceded its adoption.

But councilwoman Jean Fox hit the mark in calling for "some ordinances with some teeth" — that peo-

ple would respect and would think twice about before allowing a contractor to do whatever he wanted for 20 minutes.

In scolding Zaitz, Fox asked: "How could this have happened after you presented a site plan, with certain limits, to the city? This is what you promised the city. This is what you're bound by."

That's a mighty persuasive argument.

LIKE FOX and councilman Paul Sowerby, I'd urge specific criminal or civil penalties for developers who violate the limits of their site plan. For starters, I'd suggest a substantial cash fine and new plantings double the number destroyed.

So the city doesn't issue what Sowerby termed "a shallow and hollow threat," City Manager William Costick will include in his analysis of possible penalties a report on staffing needs to enforce site plans.

That report shouldn't be taken lightly. Our natural resources are too precious and too few.

Vigilance is only as effective as enforcement. If we're going to prevent "progress" from ravaging streams, woodlands and wetlands.

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.

### Blind justice sees dollars

To the editor:

Newly graduated engineers outnumber newly graduated lawyers by 10 to one in Japan. It's vice versa in the United States.

While the Japanese have the world's greatest economic success since World War II, the U.S. has set records in accumulating national debt and trade deficits.

One of the few growth industries in the U.S. has been the judicial system, which serves as an employment agency for lawyers. Just today, over 80 cases were scheduled in one Oakland courtroom all at 9:30 a.m. to maximize legal fees.

People like Stanford Stoddard, Jay Kogan, Judy Agenstein and former Reagan administration aide Lyn Nofziger all succeeded in having their convictions overturned by incurring legal fees of up to \$1.5 million. It all goes to prove that justice isn't blind but that it generally sees only dollar signs!

No-fault divorce, like no-fault anything, is a legal obscenity surpassed only by Supreme Court-authorized flag burning!

Under no-fault divorce, one party without charges or evidence can force the other partner into court, necessitating open-ended legal expense and tying up assets all for the sole purpose of trying to effect a generous financial settlement.

Erma Bombeck recently wrote, "People talk about the moral breakdown and the lack of ethics in America as if they don't know what to do about them. I know what to do: Bring back guilt!"

Judge Norbert A. Nadel in Cincinnati, who handled the Pete Rose case, received \$1,600 in campaign contributions from the two law firms representing Rose. In fact, during his election campaigns in 1982 and 1984, Judge Nadel received 690 contributions totaling almost \$53,500. No conflict of interests here!

An Associated Press review of 955 judicial financial disclosure forms shows that most federal judges have six-figure investment portfolios and many jurists make more money off the bench than on. Nonetheless, many judges are dissatisfied.

Ralph E. Schumacher  
Bloomfield Hills

### Drunk driving laws are joke

To the editor:

It is no wonder that the citizens in the tri-county area think our drunk driving rules and drug-related offenses are a joke.

We have recently had three cases that have been very prominent in the media both locally and out of state and are considered very, very serious offenses of the drunk driving laws of our state and our communi-

ty. I am referring to (state Rep. Dennis) Dutko, (Detroit Red Wings star Bob) Probert and (Detroit Red Wings star Petr) Klimes.

Students Against Driving Drunk and Mothers Against Drunk Drivers must feel very frustrated. How can you expect students, athletes or the youth of our communities to pay any attention to your laws or the threat of punishment?

You have Mr. Dutko with his drunk driving record. He is finally caught, he finds religion (so to speak), and is remorseful until he realizes he was not going to get his sentence changed or lessened. He, therefore, has reneged on his promises.

Mr. Klimes and Mr. Probert have lied consistently about their remorse. Each time, they are given another chance by our extremely liberal judges who do not have the foresight or guts to sentence according to what these serious offenses necessitate.

When it comes to drunk driving, our entire judicial system and laws are a joke. How do you expect athletes to be told not to do steroids, drugs or alcohol because if they do they will be penalized. The Red Wings took Klimes and Probert back at every opportunity, for the sake of winning.

It's very sad and frustrating when you're working with our youth or even adults in trying to impress that when you do drugs it's bad for you.

Keneth Kereen, vice president,  
Schweitzer Real Estate  
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