

Opinion

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

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Sidewalks They belong on major roads

MUCH ADO about nothing?

Not exactly. We can appreciate the apprehension longtime Farmington Road residents feel toward plans to build a sidewalk along the two-lane residential stretch between 12 Mile and 13 Mile.

Opposition often comes from homeowners across whose front yards walkways will pass. Falling property values, more vandalism and less privacy are just some of their fears — well-founded or not.

Still, we applaud the Farmington Hills City Council's longstanding policy that calls for sidewalks along all major roads.

Safety is as much a reason to add walkways as utility. Walking or jogging along gravel shoulders — or worse, in the roadway — is as much a cause of Russian roulette as a form of exercise.

Developers are required to install sidewalks along major-road frontage. So why shouldn't the city respond when 100 residents petition for a sidewalk along major roads bordering their subdivisions?

In our view, the city council acted responsibly in instructing staff to do engineering for a sidewalk along Farmington Road, between 12 Mile and 13 Mile — the main artery in one of the city's most densely populated areas.

WISELY. THE council deferred deciding which side of the road to build the walk until routing for a new storm drain is known by the year's end. There's no point in rushing to build the walk now only to have to tear it up later.

The issue isn't one of mere convenience, as councilman Paul Sowerby curiously put it. Granted, the sidewalk will make it easier to get to schools, stores, the Y, the library and the post office, particularly with a traffic light going in at Farmington Road and Bayberry/Hearthstone.

But I'll also keep pedestrians off a heavily traveled road where traffic zips along at 40 mph-plus.

Let there be no mistake: Gravel shoulders are no substitutes for sidewalks.

Utility and safety — those are two mighty persuasive arguments for a sidewalk, as we see it.

Surely, anyone who buys a home along a major road must one day expect some encroachment, either in the form of road widening or a sidewalk. That's why we have public rights-of-way!

Meanwhile, laying an impersonal slab of concrete — without concern for privacy or property rights — just isn't the city's style.

"We try to be sensitive and work with homeowners," says City Manager William Costick, whose track record backs up that pledge.

THE CITY not only meanders walks around landscaping where possible but also even transplants trees if necessary. It tries not to crowd lot lines. And it bears the cost of upkeep and repairs, except for snow removal.

To argue that Farmington Hills isn't a walking community, as one Farmington Road resident does, holds little sway with us.

As we look around the community — in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening — there's no shortage of walkers, joggers, baby carriage pushers.

Let there be no mistake: Gravel shoulders are no substitutes for sidewalks. In 1988, a 58-year-old woman walking against traffic on the shoulder of Power Road one summer morning died after being hit by a car that ran off the pavement.

Heck, we think a sidewalk along Farmington Road not only should extend to 13 Mile, but all the way to 14 Mile.

As Colony Park subdivision resident Kevin Regan bluntly put it: "Farmington Road is an accident waiting to happen."

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How much better it is to fight the drug war that way than by Wayne County Sheriff Robert Ficano's silly traffic checkpoints, truly an unacceptable battle tactic.

REMEMBER the checkpoints . . . Ficano's plan to stop every vehicle at a certain point in an attempt to drive traffic away from suspected crack houses? Hopefully, the checkpoints are history.

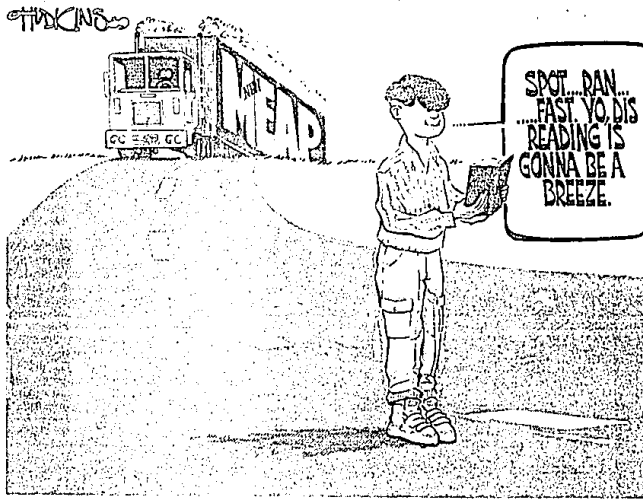
To our knowledge and as of this writing, only one checkpoint has been staged in metropolitan Detroit. It was held in Inkster in Wayne County almost two weeks ago and it netted very little dope, according to accounts.

Of dubious legality for starters, traffic checkpoints are a waste of police manpower and equipment. Local officers, who certainly would be required to man the checkpoints, have better things to do with their time.

The latest checkpoint scheme is the proverbial bad penny returning. Three years ago, checkpoints were proposed to rid Michigan's highways of drunk drivers. The idea has since been declared illegal.

Besides, dopers certainly aren't going to wait in a line of cars for 10 or 15 minutes at some checkpoint for a sheriff's deputy to check them out. If they have any dope, they're going to ditch it or hide it.

But if the authorities from the many law-enforcement agencies continue to cooperate the way they did during last weekend's raids . . . well, maybe there is just the slightest glimmer of hope in these dark early days of the war on drugs.



Pro-life leader's cause: trip back to Dark Ages

SAY IT ain't so, Joe. Say it ain't so.

Joe Scheidler and other leaders of the Christian right promised all they wanted was an end to abortion. They pleaded from the pulpit and used their political savvy. They marched and petitioned.

Now people like Scheidler, director of a national pro-life group determined to close down abortion clinics, have snuck into the privacy of our bedrooms. They want to put an end to the use of all birth control in this country.

"We believe all methods create abortion. We think the contraception mentality is a pro-abortion mentality," Scheidler said this week. "It's opposed to life." Another leader called birth control research "anti-child."

What nonsense.

YOU MIGHT recall Scheidler. The leader of a national group, the Pro-Life Action League, he came to town for rallies at Farmington Hills and Livonia abortion clinics last spring, during which time I interviewed him.

Pro-life forces in the Farmington area were proud to have this national figure here, supporting their cause, which was to shut down a clinic on Orchard Lake Road that offers abortion services for women.

He was pleasant but pompous. He knew what was best for everyone. He smugly bragged about his many



Casey Hans

Now people like Scheidler, director of a national pro-life group determined to close down abortion clinics, have snuck into the privacy of our bedrooms.

arrests, in nearly every city in which he protested. He wore them like a badge of honor.

Maybe next time, someone should arrest him and throw away the key.

IT WAS predicted that this movement would spread from addressing the morality of abortion, to addressing the morality of birth control. People like our friend Joe said they wouldn't touch birth control — that wasn't the issue, they said.

Well, they changed their minds. We live in an age where an estimated 92 percent of sexually active

women between the ages of 15-44 use some method of birth control, mostly the birth control pill or sterilization of either the man or woman in a relationship, according to recent statistics. These decisions are made by both women and men and affect the lives of everyone.

The rather frightening thing is that pro-life groups have already changed the priorities of birth control research, according to one professor who studies the issue. He believes there is also "a chilling effect" on big pharmaceutical firms, who are afraid of consumer boycotts.

Thus, they lay low on their research.

SO, EVEN though they may not be able to rid our country of birth control, they may be robbing everyone of new, safer technologies with their political pressures.

Scheidler and other pro-life leaders now invite us all on a trip back to the Dark Ages, with their groups acting as tour guides. What makes them think either the average woman, or man, will stand for such a small-minded look at life?

Best wishes to Joe Scheidler for a fertile life. May he and his wife have as many children as possible.

Hopefully, they'll be so busy he won't have time to pursue his nonsensical whims.

Casey Hans is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.

Dope raids

Cop cooperation a good sign

NOW THAT'S more like it! Give us more crackdowns and forget those traffic checkpoints.

That was our thinking upon hearing the good news that more than 400 officers from 17 local, state and federal agencies in the metropolitan area conducted a coordinated narcotics crackdown Friday and Saturday.

If published reports are to be believed, more than 100 were arrested and \$150,000, 65 weapons and eight vehicles were confiscated, along with a goodly amount of crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana and other dangerous narcotics.

Most of the raids were in Detroit, but several took place in other parts of Wayne County and in Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Monroe counties.

That's not too bad for an early dust-up on the Detroit front of the much-ballyhooed war on drugs.

Of course, the money and dope taken in this so-called Operation Crackdown is truly a tiny amount compared to what's really out there. Many of those arrested were out on bail in short order. Such is the nature of our revolving-door criminal justice system.

Unfortunately, it was business as usual once the police were gone in many of the raided areas.

OVERALL, the whole operation had tinges of a public relations play designed to let John and Jane Q. Public know (through friendly newspaper and TV reports) that the good guys aren't doing "nothing about dope (and dopers)" that plague their communities.

Still, there was something positive in those raids. In a rare spirit of cooperation, many different police agencies worked together and took the fight to the dopers, where it belongs.

How often do we see members of such diverse law enforcement agencies as the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Secret Service; the State Police and the Wayne and Macomb County sheriff's departments work together on a project?

If police have been sharing intelligence and manpower in the recent past, we sure haven't noticed it. But it's going to have to happen a lot in the future if we're going to win even a battle,

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.

Tougher laws badly needed

To the editor:
Three cheers to Bob Sklar for his editorial, "Wetlands Damage: Slap on wrist is not enough" (Sept. 7), seeking tough laws to prevent greedy developers from ruining our remaining wetlands.

(There is) a house under construction next to my property. One day, the contractor filled in the creek running through the property with dirt to get his bulldozer to the other side, not considering the damage done to the creek.

This could have easily flooded my property upstream because the water was rapidly rising. The city, I assume, made him remove the dirt that day. About a month or so later, he did the same thing again. He obviously could not care less about the damage to the creek.

If we had a tough law enforced to the max, he might have thought differently. I sincerely hope the Farmington Hills City Council takes all steps to crack down on developers who view money as the only greenery of value.

My sincere compliments also to councilwoman Jean Fox for all her efforts in protecting the remaining

natural areas in our city. C'mon Farmington Hills, let's get real tough on the uncaring people who would ruin what we have left just to put a buck in their pockets.

Joe Derek,
Farmington Hills

Sidewalks a crucial need

To the editor:
A big thank you to Farmington Hills City Council members Phillip Arnold, Ben Marks, Jody Soronen and Mayor Terry Sever for their votes against a proposal to spend \$80,000 to film the city council meetings for cable television.

These council members believe the money should be spent for more pressing needs, such as sidewalks. For this, I applaud them.

While filming city council meetings for cable television has a place in our city's future, I believe the acute need for more sidewalks should take funding precedence.

I did not quite understand councilmember Paul Sowerby's comment about "tunnel vision" when he and council member Jean Fox voted for the cable appropriation.

I hope Mr. Sowerby does not believe installation of long-awaited

and much-needed sidewalks constitutes tunnel vision.

For the safety and convenience of all the citizens of Farmington Hills, we need many more sidewalks.

Joyce M. Regan,
Farmington Hills

Support our homeless now

To the editor:

As a concerned citizen about the problem of homelessness, I am writing about an important event that you will, no doubt, want to write about in your suburban papers.

This event is Housing Now! A march on Washington scheduled Oct. 7 to bring pressure on our legislators to take action for affordable housing. As many as 3 million Americans are presently homeless, this is surely a national disgrace.

Last week, I heard on the radio that the average cost of a house in this country just topped \$100,000.

Where will even a small portion of these new homeless save enough for a mortgage? We cannot think it just for some of us to have everything, and others to have nothing.

Dr. S.W. Cameron,
Farmington

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