

points of view

The Farmington Hills City Council will discuss the controversy surrounding a Nov. 18 planning commission decision banning use of loudspeakers or amplifiers at the Community Center of Farmington Hills.

Farmington Hills' amphitheater.

Discussion will take place at the council's annual goals and issues study session Saturday, Jan. 20, in city hall.

Neighbors have complained about the noise from the outdoor amphitheater. Center officials say the one-year ban will sharply curtail events and negatively affect their budget.

Reporting shows bias

To the editor:
As a member of the local business community, a resident of Farmington Hills for 21 years and a customer of yours for the same number of years, I am appalled at your biased reporting, lack of community (vs. individual) awareness, and a general reporting disregard for the community programs provided by our local Farmington-Farmington Hills Community Center.

You should be ashamed and embarrassed.

At a time when our country's social society is under attack from so many directions, our local community needs all programs provided by the Community Center — and yet you support reducing these programs by your biased reporting and threaten the very existence of this fine institution in our community.

Listen and report for all the people — not just a few. Respond to our community and protect the Community Center — not attack it.

I enjoy the Farmington Observer, and have for many years, but I am very disappointed in you and the manner in which your paper is reporting the center's problems.

William G. Carey,
Farmington Hills

Planners earn vote of thanks

To the editor:

We, the undersigned residents of Farmington Hills and neighbors of the Community Center, would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Farmington Hills Planning Commission for the majority decision of Nov. 16.

That decision requires the removal and elimination of electrical service at the Community Center outdoor theater for the purpose of sound amplification as well as certain other remedies required of the Community Center to conform their operations to city ordinances.

We realize this mandate was not an easy decision to make. We are also aware that various citizens of the community are less than enthralled with the resolution adopted by the planning commission.

However, it has always been, and continues to be, our intention that any individual or group that would subject themselves to a demonstration of the excessive noise levels emitted from the Community Center outdoor theater during performance would immediately concede that amplified entertainment has no place in a residential environment.

Our contention is further supported by the results of the on-site demonstration conducted by the planning commission Nov. 9.

Every member of the planning commission that attended the demonstration voted unanimously to discontinue the use of electrical power for the purpose of sound amplification at the outdoor theater location. The only dissenting vote was cast by a member of the planning commission not present for the demonstration.

We would like to express our appreciation to the planning commission for your collective foresight and wisdom in dealing with this situation. Because of your efforts and actions, there truly will be "Peace on Earth" in our neighborhood this holiday season.

Scott Morris,
Darrell Bratt,
Donald Stolberg,
William Shortt,
George and Irene Totkay,
Farmington Hills

Land use — not obnoxious

To the editor:

I am writing on behalf of the Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills to share my opinion on the value of its programs produced and offered for our community.

I attend programs, both "inside" and "outside," and thoroughly enjoy the cultural variety and high quality of each. These activities and the strength of the attendance are a direct reflection of the desire of the people.

I want our planning commission to seriously reconsider the impact of its restrictions on the outdoor programs. Understanding and cooperation is vital to successfully move forward in all aspects of our community affairs.

Pure and simple, this is not an obnoxious land use activity that infringes on a residential land use. Let's work to find a common ground for the benefit of everyone.

Alfred W. Diebel,
Farmington Hills

Music vital for center

To the editor:

Residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills have so much to be proud of, not the least of which is a fine cultural/musical program offered at the Community Center.

Now it seems that the outdoor portions of these events, portions requiring a microphone, are in jeopardy. So very many of us who live here would lose something very special if such concerts were no longer available.

For many of us, Pine Knob and Meadow Brook are not viable alternatives.

We hope that the Farmington Hills Planning Commission and the few dissenting neighbors can come to an agreement that will restore this important and vital source of music to our community.

Betty Love,
Farmington Hills

Keep center programming

To the editor:

Our family of four registered voters wishes to see all the programs continued at the Farmington-Farmington Hills Community Center.

Let's not start looking like "Little Russia."

Mrs. Daniel McKinnon,
Farmington Hills

1990 focus

Code of ethics should be main thrust

OAKLAND COUNTY officials have done a laudable job from what I've seen over the three months or so that I've been on this beat.

They've put a lot of time and effort into a number of sticky problems, with the \$470 million solid waste plan probably being the most difficult.

But I believe their first order of business for the 1990s should be a sleeper item that was introduced as commissioners were winding down the year: Developing a code of ethics for themselves and other county employees.

It's not that commissioners, the county executive and his staff or any other Oakland officials have done anything wrong. Nor is county government awash with incompetence, much less actual graft or malfeasance.

But the nature of county government is changing. Growth — with all its blessings and problems — is making government more complex and demanding more demands on those involved.

OAKLAND COUNTY is the richest in Michigan and, very likely, the most active in terms of economic activity. Bigness and richness are by no means the only measure of a community. But we are on the way to becoming the most important county in Michigan.

Accordingly, our roads — to pick just one urban problem — are among the most congested. Indeed, I'm one of those who wonder if our present form of government — with 27 part-time commissioners — is adequate to handle ever-increasing demands for services.

I don't want more county government and nobody wants more political hacks. But I wonder if a few full-time commissioners, say 10, might provide a better check-and-balance.

It's entirely possible that Oakland County will be able to efficiently meet the demands of the '90s — whatever they may be — with a business-as-usual approach.

HOWEVER WE approach the '90s,

Pat Murphy

the commissioners' first order of business should be code of ethics.

Some will say the county doesn't need one. As County Executive Dan Murphy points out, "Adults shouldn't need another code to govern their conduct."

Perhaps. The Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, existing civil law and common sense should be adequate.

But look at some of the problems that have plagued county government in the last three months. Consider these items:

• Six county employees were fired or otherwise disciplined — although some are being reinstated — for a variety of questionable practices.

Some sanitarians and/or inspectors failed to disclose their involvement in land development while other employees failed to disclose their financial interests in land development in the county.

• The county has a \$470 million solid waste program. When money like that is involved, look out.

In Fort Wayne, Ind., where I last covered county government, card players have a folksy saying: "No matter how dumb they look, cut the cards."

The municipal counterpart is: "No matter how honest they look, audit the books."

• Commissioner Anne M. Hobart, R-Milford, recently resigned to take a \$35,000-a-year job with the county's solid waste program after extensive involvement in planning and implementing the \$470 million program.

Hobart, a retired teacher, has credentials and is knowledgeable about solid waste. She also has an impeccable record.

But if a general at the Pentagon were to resign and go to work for a defense contractor — say McDonnell

Douglas or General Dynamics — eyebrows would raise.

• Russell D. Martin, the county's director of management and budget, came under fire when he bought property in the area being considered as a possible site for a multi-million dollar county landfill.

Martin is respected by his colleagues as a competent, hard-working financial guy with extreme integrity.

But no wonder residents in the northern townships questioned the transactions and asked for some review or investigation. The prosecutor's office reviewed the matter, by the way, and said there was no evidence of questionable practices or wrongdoing.

But people have a right to be suspicious, no matter how honest Martin or other public officials might be.

• County commissioners decided to seek new bids on the \$9 million computer center to be built next year. As submitted, the bids had too many "irregularities," and the unsuccessful bidders threatened to file suit.

Those bids may have been perfectly acceptable, as corporation counsel Jack C. Hays said. But the county has been hiring contractors for some time. Bidding processes shouldn't be vague. Specifications, by definition should be specific, without "irregularities."

I'M NOT the only one to see these items in a sinister context. At the last county board meeting, a resident from the Oxford Township area raised similar questions.

He also made it clear he didn't trust the county commissioners — particularly after activities of the last three months.

Thus, commissioners should think about a code of ethics and the appearance of impropriety.

And maybe in deliberating about ethics, commissioners would send a message about the need for integrity — if only to themselves.

Pat Murphy covers Oakland County for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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