

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

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Opportunity

Mayor builds strong agenda

ONLY TIME will tell what kind of mayor Jean Fox will be in 1990, a "year of opportunity," as she aptly put it.

At 72, she's as active and trailblazing as many people half her age. Sure, she's feisty and quick-tempered, but she's also one of the Farmington Hills City Council's most incisive thinkers. She can be ruthless yet caring, rattle-raising yet pensive.

Her community vigor is legendary. We, too, subscribe to the "noble notion that each individual owes something to this society, to this small section of a wonderful globe — our home and hearth — which has given us so much."

As the city's resident historian, Fox can be a bit old-fashioned, never passing a chance to recall a simpler time when "we never locked our doors or if we did, it was with a skeleton key."

Beyond that, it'll be interesting to see how much latitude she gives constituents and others who angrily address the city council. She's not one to pass up the chance to strip off the kid gloves and barknuckle it, no matter what the issue. We trust she treats folks with equal respect and doesn't play favorites.

AS SHE settles into the mayoral hotseat, Fox must be careful to show restraint. She can't afford to alienate fellow council members, whose support she needs to accomplish her thoughtful agenda for 1990.

Her acceptance speech unwittingly provided a theme we'll remind the council of throughout the year: "We shall endeavor as a council to work this year in some kind of harmony, so we do not become objects of satire or scorn."

But she perceptively reminded that the council consists of "seven different people, from seven different environments" who, though they often agree, are prone to taking part in some real donnybrooks.

We're pleased to hear she'll continue to fight for tougher liquor laws, a stronger municipal code of ethics, stricter environmental controls and a rein on property taxes.

Gun safety

Bills seek to educate public

THE PROLIFERATION of incidents involving the use of guns in the suburbs should be cause for concern among those who live and work here.

Consider the following:

- In November a Rochester Hills couple, Glenn and Wanda Tarr, are abducted and later killed with a handgun in a Pontiac park.

- On Dec. 13 Westland recorded a double homicide as the result of a domestic dispute between an estranged couple that ended with a shotgun blast.

- In the last four months, Southfield has had six shootings with two people killed, seven injured.

- Last week at Plymouth and Telegraph in Redford, a Livonia man was shot in his pickup truck while stopped at a light.

- And Sunday night, a security guard was shot at an auto plant in Livonia and died several hours later.

THAT'S NOT A record to be proud of.

The reasons for the shootings range from domestic disputes to drug deals gone sour. Since the causes are so varied, the solutions must have an equally wide range of appeal.

There are two bills lodged in the state House judiciary committee that, unlike some calls to

limit gun availability, provide for education in the proper use of guns.

House Bill No. 4163 would require a person to successfully complete a pistol education course before receiving a license to carry one.

WHILE THE general public has the right to bear arms, it also has the responsibility to use them with care.

HB 4163 provides for instruction in the safe handling, storing, cleaning and discharging of a pistol and information relating to laws about pistol ownership. It also provides for training materials for a single session to last from two to six hours in duration. The training is to be done by law enforcement agencies, such as sheriff's deputies.

Also in the House judiciary committee is bill No. 5212 which instructs gun owners on the proper storage of loaded firearms when there is a possibility of minors (less than 16 years old) gaining access to them without permission.

The bill calls for reasonableness in its directives and provides penalties if a minor does gain access to the firearm.

Both bills are responsible moves to educate a public determined to arm itself. If you are concerned about gun safety and what's been happening in our neighborhoods, write your state lawmaker.

Like cigarettes, cable TV is fun and addicting. But Americans don't need it to live.

When your local cable firm raises the basic price, which seems to happen Feb. 1 in most places, you can cancel an add-on movie or sports channel to keep your total bill level. Once you're down to basic, you can cancel the service entirely, use the VCR or read. This can really hurt the franchisee because it needs a lot of subscribers to pay for the wire it has strung up.

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WHAT CAN people do? Governmental price fixing isn't feasible. There has been talk in Washington of allowing competing services within an area, although it's still unclear how that would work.

Some franchisees call for a public hearing every three years to evaluate the franchisee's performance. People should use the hearing to squawk.

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Cable TV

How to fight rate increases

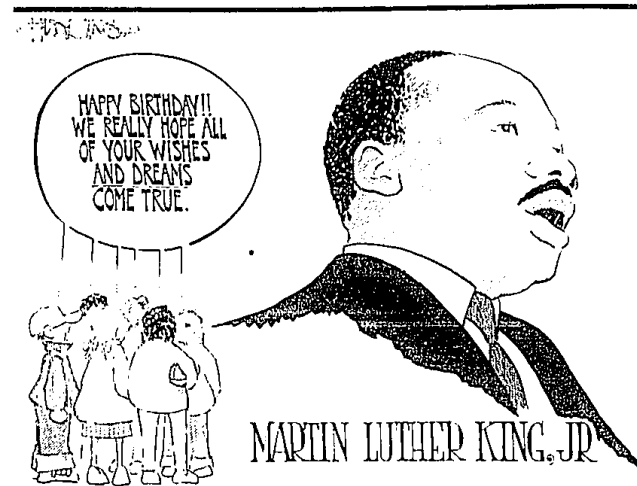
CABLE TV received a warm welcome from Americans when it emerged two decades ago. Today that welcome is becoming chillier as cable companies, with a similarity of action that resembles unanimity, raise rates annually.

Not since the OPEC oil cartel gouging of the 1970s have we seen an industry raise its prices by double-digit percentages so inexorably every year.

There's a pattern to the price raising. The cable company jacks up the price of the "basic" service and holds the line on the subscription movie and sports channels.

Meanwhile, the number of commercials seems to grow. Somebody is making an enormous amount of money.

The industry ethically is in a gray area. On one hand, it requires a local governmental franchise to string its wires and to operate. On the other, it's not a public utility, so it's hard to justify governmental price regulation.



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Yep, burden indeed is on Community Center

IT'S A private operation. But it's dependent on public support.

And the future is foggy at best for the Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills.

That's because of an impasse between the 21-year-old center and the Farmington Hills Planning Commission over sound amplification at summertime amphitheater performances and year-round indoor weddings.

Given the dozens of headlines and letters about the planners' 1-year ban on use of loudspeakers and microphones, Mayor Jean Fox is right: The Farmington Hills City Council has an obligation to address the Mexican standoff.

Neighbors argue the use of sound amplifiers creates intolerable noise. Directors say the ban will limit bookings and sharply curtail revenue of the non-profit center.

1. FOR one, don't object to an ad hoc committee of two council members and two city administrators giving direction in hopes of striking a compromise between the Community Center and its neighbors.

Sure, I'm concerned about undue political influence on city planners. But as Aldo Vagnozzi reminded fellow council members: "We are the only elected officials in this community. In the final analysis, the buck stops here."

He acknowledged that the council has no authority to impose a settle-



Bob Sklar

ment to keep the music coming in a mellow, less intrusive way. But I concur that it has "a responsibility to try to work one out."

Councilman Jon Grant perceptively pointed out that the city council endorsed the Community Center's move to a cultural arts niche during a fiscal crisis three years ago.

AT A council study session Monday, Mayor Fox unveiled some good ideas to rekindle discussions: no amplification of amphitheater music, no amplification of any kind inside the historic mansion, no brass or percussion outside on the mansion grounds.

The Observer, meanwhile, has called for decibel limits to objectively measure noise.

The impasse boils down to a land use dispute: What noise level is acceptable to neighbors and how will the Community Center monitor it? Says Fox, "The Community Center is not on an island with no one around."

Even councilman Grant, a longtime Community Center booster, says neighbors shouldn't have "to

put up with an unreasonable amount of noise."

IN A particularly insightful observation, councilman Larry Lichtman said the burden is on the Community Center to modify its programming to satisfy the planning commission's rightful concern about noise floating aimlessly through the valley.

"Nobody at the Community Center so far has put forth a lot of energy in proposing concrete changes in the operation," he said.

"They're in the best position to solve their own problem," he added. "They're the ones who're going to have to go back to the drawing board."

Especially troublesome about this sticky wicket is the bad rap given city planners. Yep, they acted hastily in imposing an outright ban on amplification instead of sound limits, but they did so only as a last resort.

Chairwoman Joanne Smith, who favored sound limits, says planners would be willing to reconsider the ban if the Community Center would be willing to tone down programming.

In the search for a seemingly elusive solution, we'd all do well to heed councilwoman Nancy Bates: "I would like to see people put themselves in each other's position to try to feel how others would feel."

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 Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

Center is a public asset

To the editor:

I am concerned about the restrictions being placed on use of the amphitheater at the Community Center. The Community Center is a wonderful asset to Farmington, and Farmington Hills. It performs a much-needed service to our community and needs our support.

I wish to see the programs continued without the imposed barriers by the Farmington Hills Planning Commission.

Lillian Greenda,
Farmington Hills

Pot smoking — no crime

To the editor:

Wow was I surprised to read a letter suggesting legalizing marijuana. Good work. For years, pot smokers have offered to have this substance taxed and pay off the national debt for our citizens. We just said no.

Now pot smokers are offering to double or quadruple the drug war fund. We just keep saying no. We offer them a cigarette and a can of

beer and tell them don't worry, be happy. It's time to get real.

If my neighbor had a couple of pot plants in his living room, it wouldn't bother me in the least. I don't know what the big stink is about pot, but an adult should have some say over his private affairs.

Building \$20,000 jail cells for casual pot smokers should be the least of our concerns. Women are battling it out for rights to control their own bodies; pot smokers face even a tougher challenge. Remember, we are at war and those are the bad guys.

If the pot smokers would pay off the national debt, fund the war on drugs, help care for the elderly, feed the hungry, and shovel our sidewalks: I say we let them smoke a few joints on the weekend.

Wayne Root,
Farmington

Higher ed gets funds

To the editor:

Since 1983, annual state funding for our state universities has increased by \$557 million, or 82 percent. During that same period, inflation, measured by the Detroit Consumer Price Index, increased by only 28 percent.

Included in this funding has been the establishment of the Research Excellence Fund, which has channeled \$129 million to projects that have put Michigan at the cutting edge of "job creating," economic development related research and the Martin Luther King/Cesar Chavez/Rosa Parks programs, which target additional financial aid to selected groups of students.

In addition to these newly established programs, we have invested, or are planning to invest, over \$1 billion in the expansion and maintenance of universities' facilities, which represents the largest capital investment that the state has committed in any area, including corrections.

Since 1983, funding for financial aid programs has been doubled, and an ongoing policy of tuition freezes and restraints has been established.

Furthermore, our highly successful and innovative Michigan Education Trust (MET), the first of its kind in the nation, enables parents to make a down payment that will guarantee their child's tuition at one of Michigan's state universities.

Investments in education, from preschool through higher education, represent Gov. Blanchard's highest priority, as demonstrated by the fact that 36 percent of the state budget goes to education.

Shelby P. Solomon, director,
Michigan Department of
Management and Budget

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