

# Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

Robert Sklar editor/477-5450

16A(F)

11&amp;E Thursday, February 22, 1990

## Pay attention Project to impact everyone

**SEWERS.** They're not the most interesting topic. Most of us would rather just flush and forget.

But there are times when we should pay close attention, especially because major infrastructure changes and improvements in sewers, roads and drains hit us all where it counts — right in the pocketbook. We might not care where our sewage goes, but most taxpayers expect the most from the use of their tax money.

Residents in the city of Farmington, as in other surrounding cities, are facing the realities of living in an older community where roads require rebuilding, downtowns need rejuvenation, and sewers need upgrading.

It's like living in an older house, where one eyes everything from a maintenance perspective.

And, in Farmington, it's fix-up time.

**THE PRICE** tag for this sewer system upgrade has been set at \$11.2 million for a project that will separate older combined sewers which process sanitary and storm water together and occasionally dump it into the Rouge River during heavy rains. It will cost the average homeowner between \$120 and \$212 per year, for about 20 years, according to city estimates.

This project needed to be done, whether or not it was mandated by state and federal clean air and water laws. The city realized this long ago, and began researching and planning for the least costly route. Now, it's just a matter of how to pay for it.

"It's something we have to do," said Mayor Shirley Richardson. "We feel our residents should be given an opportunity to tell us how to pay for it. It's going to be their choice."

Elected and appointed city officials from Farmington are hoping to answer questions and present the sewer separation/improvement project at a March 6 public hearing which starts at 8 p.m. at city hall. At that time, city engineers will present the project, explain its timetable, and answer questions from residents.

*This project needed to be done, whether or not it was mandated by state and federal clean air and water laws. The city realized this long ago, and began researching and planning for the least costly route. Now, it's just a matter of how to pay for it.*

They want residents to be there to gain an understanding about how the sewer lines will be separated, the 3.2-million-gallon underground sewage retention tank planned for a section of Nine Mile just east of Brookdale, and other changes that will be made to the city's underpinnings.

Mayor Richardson has stated that the project will likely tear up the town and inconvenience a number of residents for some 1 1/2 years.

It's the largest project, in terms of cost and magnitude, that the city has ever undertaken.

The city hopes to lasso a low-interest loan from the state for this project, something state officials say is likely because of the city's quick planning and action and early application. Residents would repay that loan either using bonds, which would show itself as debt millage for about the next 20 years, or through water and sewage rates.

The city will ask the electorate at a special May 22 election whether bonds are the way to go. Although the project is estimated to cost \$11.2 million, the city will seek up to \$12 million in bonds to allow for construction design and other project contingencies.

The March 6 public hearing will give everyone a chance to decide.

They're our dollars, and it's our city. We owe it to ourselves to be well-informed, especially about these topics which seem so remote, yet hit so close to home.

*The basic flaw with Patterson-Anderson is that it would glue legislative policies onto the state constitution. That's not what a constitution is for.*

electors" — so says the Patterson-Anderson synopsis.

It's not the function of a constitution to write detailed regulations for school district elections, "emergencies" (whatever that means) or petition drives.

When voters don't like things, they say "no," recall the school board, replace trustees at the next regular election, or get the superintendent fired. Or all of the above.

What has been one of the chief faults of the 1978 Headlee tax limitation amendment? Its complexity gives politicians incentive to stay up at night and concoct ways to frustrate its well meaning intent. "Headlee" is good policy but demonstrably poor as constitutional law.

**ONE SPONSOR** of this amendment is L. Brooks Patterson, former 16-year prosecutor of Oakland County, a skilled presenter now in the private practice of law in Troy. He made one unsuccessful run for a legislative office, the U.S. Senate.

The other is Patrick Anderson, vice president of economics of Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. in Farmington Hills. His credentials include giving advice to William Lucas, who never was a legislator, and to Richard Chrysler, who never was a legislator or any other kind of officeholder.

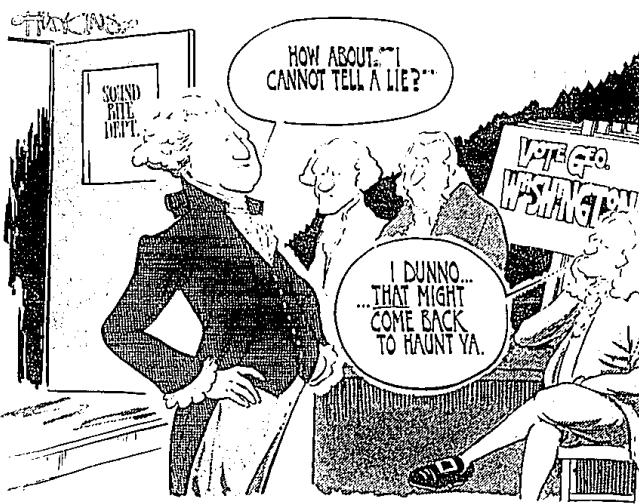
We do not demean two intelligent and sincere men in pointing out that neither has served in a legislative area. Yet despite their inexperience, they propose to do legislative work with a petition campaign and constitutional amendment.

Saying each district should receive no less than \$4,190 per pupil at 28 mills — that doesn't belong in a constitution.

Writing depreciation rules on personal property — that doesn't belong in a constitution.

Writing rules on how not to pay for court judgments — that doesn't belong in a constitution.

No useful purpose would be served by placing this hairy wad of formulas and fishhooks on the ballot. Patterson and Anderson would do us a greater service in selling their inventive and frequently laudable proposals to those with the gumption to run for the Legislature.



## Racism's curse seen in struggling suburb

**WE ALL HAVE** a lesson to learn from what is happening in Southfield, a community not much different than your own.

Twenty years ago not a whole lot of thought was given to it. If you said Southfield, the images that came to mind were Northland Shopping Center, the big ankara on the grounds of WXYZ and sprawling subdivisions with big yards.

All that, of course, is still part of Southfield.

And in a lot of ways Southfield is a lot like your suburban community — good school district, convenient shopping malls, nice homes, peaceful parks, a couple of skating rinks, movie theaters and several nice restaurants to boot.

Sounds like a pretty nice place to live. And indeed it is.

But then, the sickness which plagues metropolitan Detroit, racism, spread its virus to Southfield.

Folks in Southfield never really thought much about race being a factor in Southfield. After all, that's why a lot them had purchased homes there — to get away. Again, that's not much different than in your suburban community.

During the 1970s and 1980s a smattering of affluence came to black America and those black

Americans in metropolitan Detroit started to look for a dream home in the suburbs.

**MANY BLACKS** chose Southfield. And that scared the hell out of many white residents who mistakenly believe that running away from blacks is the way to solve their problem.

Adding to the problems were the vultures who saw economic gain in this panic.

An invisible line was drawn along 10 Mile. Suddenly it became tough for a white person to find a home south of that line. It became even tougher for blacks to find a home north of it.

Racism is a lot like AIDS. It hangs around for a long time without showing any symptom and then suddenly it reveals itself. Scientists are unsure of what activates the AIDS virus. The onset of active racism is a little easier to trace.

It usually occurs in a suburb when "too many" blacks move in. The specific number has yet to be identified. We know that if you have just a handful of blacks in a community that everybody feels pretty good about that, especially if they are doctors and lawyers.

But if the numbers get too large, the for sale signs and moving vans



Steve Barnaby

spread like wild fire.

A few Southfield officials blame the media, this newspaper in particular, for the city's image problem.

That's pretty tough to figure since this newspaper supports racial equality, continually lauds officials in their attempts to make Southfield a truly integrated community and consistently points out that before it can solve any of its economic problems, metropolitan Detroit must deal with racism first.

But it's not surprising. Some of these same officials have objected because they believe we run too many black faces in the Southfield Eccentric.

Think about that one for a second.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## 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, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

## Seat belt law change is proposed

To the editor:

Law enforcement in this state could take one giant step forward with just a simple change in the safety-belt law, making it a primary offense.

Every traffic law in Michigan can be enforced when witnessed by a law enforcement officer — every one except the safety-belt-use law. The safety-belt-use law can only be enforced when a motorist commits some other traffic violation.

It makes little sense that one of Michigan's best laws is enforceable only on a secondary basis. This law needs to be enforced on a primary basis to achieve its full potential as a money-saving, life-saving, injury-preventing law.

In 1988, more than 157,000 people were injured or killed in Michigan motor-vehicle accidents. Among the fatal crashes, almost 80 percent of the victims with safety belts available were not wearing them. According to the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, Michigan's adult safety belt law prevented 31,710 injuries through De-

cember of 1988, a cost savings of \$734.72 million.

With primary enforcement of the law, thousands of injuries could be prevented, millions of dollars can be saved, and fewer families would suffer heartache. Michigan needs to join the ranks of the primary enforcement states. It works in other states and it will work here.

William J. Dwyer,  
Chief of Police  
City of Farmington Hills  
Frank Lauboff,  
Director of Public Safety,  
City of Farmington

## Japan, not Russia, our adversary

To the editor:

For nearly two decades the Japanese have had free access to our shores but they have never opened their ports to our goods. Almost two-thirds of last year's \$55 billion dollar trade gap with Japan was in the automotive market.

While the Japanese sold nearly 3 million imports to Americans last year, they in turn only bought 15,000 American-made cars and trucks

from us and 5,000 of these were Hondas built in Ohio. Dealer restrictions and high tariffs make it nearly impossible to sell American makes, and to top it off they rarely consider buying American parts for the very cars and trucks they build here.

This fact is in itself as unfair as one nation can be toward another.

The very future of this nation, and the future of our children depend on our decisions at this critical point in time. Unless we as true Americans realize that Japan will never play fair with us, then we must take strong measures to see that some type of law or laws are imposed on them to even the score.

In my opinion, the Japanese are a more real adversary than Russia or any other nation because their actions for nearly 20 years have never shown any regard for our well-being. Do not be deceived, time is short, and if we don't unite against this threat the future of true American automobile companies and more disturbing the persons working for these companies will be in real peril.

The ripple effect of the crippling of our automobile companies will cause a depression in this country like the world has never experienced before. Let's be honest, if we don't buy the goods our own people produce, what good is it to call ourselves Americans?

Rodell C. Smith  
Chrysler Design (Retired)  
Royal Oak

## Observer & Eccentric® Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor  
Judith Doner Berne assistant managing editor  
Dick Leahy general manager  
Richard Brady director of advertising  
Fred Wright director of circulation

Suburban Communications Corp.  
Philip Power chairman of the board  
Richard Aginian president