

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

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O&E Monday, March 26, 1990

Basketball

Enact change in Hills zoning

SORRY, Mayor Fox. You may not be "convinced there's a real need" for legitimizing pole-mounted basketball backboards and hoops in front or minimum side yards.

Hundreds of such backboards and hoops already exist in Farmington Hills. They're very popular.

"As councilman Larry Lichtman bluntly put it: 'Farmington Hills' time could be better spent worrying about things other than basketball hoops."

Put another way, chief zoning code enforcement officer Lee Blizman's inspectors have more important zoning matters to pursue.

Suddenly, the city should ticket residents who dare defy an overbearing ordinance and prosecute them in 47th District Court, where they face a misdemeanor penalty of up to 90 days in jail and a \$500 fine?

Should that scenario ever arise, the TV news hounds would be licking their chops. Such Big Brother antics are exactly the kind of confrontation they thrive on.

MAYOR FOX. We trust your city council colleagues know better tonight and vote to enact a proposed zoning text amendment that allows one garage- or pole-mounted backboard and hoop per front or minimum side yard per house.

The change doesn't zap all control. Under it, poles must be within the third of the yard nearest the house. They've always been allowed in rear yards, some side yards and on garages.

Sure we're concerned about safety.

But the lack of sidewalks in many subdivisions has prompted some change in lifestyle. Chasing a basketball into the street is no more dangerous than skateboarding in the street.

And the parent who suggested he'd rather have kids playing on the driveway than unattended on a playground makes a lot of sense to us.

As for the tacky appearance of some poles, backboards or hoops, councilman Terry Sever is right. That's often just a symptom of blight.

"For those who have unsightly basketball

We think it's un-American to encroach more into private lives and impose government's will on — egad! — playing basketball.

hoops in their driveway," he said, "they probably need their trim painted, garage door straightened and bushes trimmed."

NOISE AT all hours of the night is a legitimate complaint. But that problem can be best addressed through the disturbing-the-peace ordinance.

The pending zoning change notwithstanding, subdivisions still have the wherewithal in their bylaws to ban or limit pole placement and design. Homeowner associations would have to enforce any restrictions through civil prosecution, however.

Granted, it's hard to amend subdivision bylaws. But to do so would underscore the depth of an association's commitment to regulating the poles.

Fox wonders if we're sending a message that "if enough people don't care to conform to some part of zoning ordinances, therefore we alter the ordinances to make things legal."

No, mayor, that's not the message.

IF THE poles are so destructive to our community, why hasn't there been a hue and cry to enforce the ordinance banning them? Why hasn't the city taken the initiative to enforce the ordinance or even publicize it?

Resident Richard Corey, who opposes the amendment, may think, "It's almost un-American to talk about not playing basketball. But we have to face up to it."

We think it's un-American to encroach more into private lives and impose government's will on — egad! — playing basketball.

By the way, a fresh coat of pole paint and new hoop cords should be on every household's spring cleanup checklist where appropriate.

Observer column stirs response from citizen

The writer, Julieann Hovanesian, is a Farmington Hills resident.

guest column

meetings of the council will be televised.

I HAVE inquired what was accomplished at the study session. I wonder why Joanne does not mention this at all in her statement. This is definitely not a case of apathy.

However, I hope Joanne realizes that the citizens were angry at the undemocratic handling of deliberations for the city by a panel of only three members. Now the council of seven, who were elected for this purpose, are going to study the matters.

I hope there will be better attendance at future study sessions, since they will not be televised, it seems.

But the important thing is that the citizens be present if they have a concern, when there is an opportunity for public input and the matters are brought before the public during regular council meetings.

Hopefully, the public will be notified of these future study sessions. Is that a practice we can expect to see? Do they really want the public at these study sessions?

MY COMPLIMENTS to Joanne. She did a wonderful job reporting the matter when the Citizens Supporting Open Meetings had its successful effort. I wonder if someone put her up to writing this article on the 19th.

I do not think she can doubt our sincerity when she realizes how much work goes into such a citizen uprising. It is an unbelievable amount of work and there is certainly no pay — except to see that things are set right for the democratic process.

My family and I are watching all televised council meetings now with great interest. I am sure the public appreciates seeing these meetings on TV. Instead of apathy, we are getting more and more interest and participation, I would say.

The best thing that could happen would be if the study sessions could be televised. Since there is no opportunity for public input, that way all residents could write to the council their feelings on matters being discussed.

from our readers

Write your lawmakers

To the editor:

I recently wrote my state senator concerning high auto insurance rates and the industry's poor regulation.

He replied that by carefully studying prospective policies, I may save considerably. He added that the insurance industry is one of the most regulated in Michigan.

I wrote the senator back, reminding him that since the auto insurance industry is exempt from anti-trust laws, they can "price-fix" by basing their rates on average costs of the most expensive carriers.

I added that over 50 percent of the state regulators are hired from the auto insurance industry, and of those, more than 50 percent are, in turn, hired back to the industry.

I compared the insurance regulators to the federal auditors that gave

Charles Keating's S&L a glowing review, and are now working for him privately at salaries of over \$1 million.

My senator has since replied with more information, as well as copies of recent House and Senate bills. It seems there's no time like an election year to tell your legislators what you think.

Timothy Lachowski,
Farmington Hills

We must live harmoniously

To the editor:

Within our society, there exist so many different forms of social abuses and social injustices — all within a world that we as human beings must live in together.

How many of us claim to believe in God, but don't care about what happens to our fellow human beings? It should not matter what type of job you have. Nor should it matter what class you're in. We should not be putting down people because they aren't rich or because they haven't got a suit and tie job.

We as human beings have created invisible barriers to divide each other. With the enormous rate of filth that plagues mankind, we cannot just become a people of cold-hearted on-lookers. There comes a time when we must take a stand, take sides — hopefully, the right side.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. While we learn to love our children, maybe we can learn about what it means to love each other as brothers, sisters and as friends, to learn what it means to be a human being, the purpose for our being.

Vernon Klepfisch,
Farmington Hills

know your government

Looking for information about state government? The League of Women Voters has a toll-free telephone service (1-800-292-5823) that may be helpful.

The league's Citizen Information Center in Lansing offers to help people find out about such things as pending legislation, the

state constitution, election laws, voting regulations or tax information.

The telephone is answered from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays.

The telephone service is paid for by the league's education fund. The League of Women Voters

is a non-profit organization that works to keep voters interested and informed about governmental issues.

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