

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024 Robert Sklar editor/477-5450

6A(F)

O&E Monday, April 23, 1990

Noisy Agreement is weak solution

WHAT IS a sweet, pleasing melody to one person is a grinding headache to another.

That distinction strikes to the heart of a continuing conflict between the Community Center of Farmington Hills and its neighbors, annoyed by noise, particularly from the historic center's outdoor concerts and activities.

Unfortunately, the heart of the matter is what a new nine-point agreement between Farmington Hills administrators and the community center fails to address.

Approved a week ago by 47th District Judge Fred Harris of Farmington, the agreement is a weak disguise for settlement of this dispute. The community center and the city seem appeased.

But the neighbors — who brought the issue to public attention — are clearly unhappy. And rightly so. There still is no reasonable and practical settlement for their complaints.

The only way to resolve the dispute to everyone's satisfaction is to develop practical, reasonable and objective decibel limits for the outdoor concerts and activities.

The agreement's suggestion that the center might eventually use an amphitheater in neighboring Heritage Park cannot serve as a future Band-Aid for a problem that's occurring now. And there are a lot of money questions yet to be answered about that suggestion. Neighbors want a resolution now.

The real purpose of the agreement, drafted by a city council-appointed committee, has been served. Center director Dorothy Pfaff will let off the criminal hook for a disturbing the peace complaint.

The agreement now requires the center's directors to face the music should provisions be breached.

The agreement also requires all neighbor complaints to go to the city attorney. He will evaluate the complaints. He will decide whether the agreement has been breached. If so, the attorney will make a motion "to set aside the agreement." Judge Harris will make the final decision.

If the complaints have to do with noise, there's no fair and reasonable way of making that decision without decibel limits. And once again, the dilemma continues.

The agreement is a rerun of the Farmington Hills Planning Commission's one-year ban on the center's use of amplification. Fine. It's been said a second time. No amplification. Courtesy, responsibility and respect toward neighbors must rule.

So what? What is loud to one person is not to another. What's irritating to one person is not to another. To some the renowned Overture of 1812 is beautifully brassy. To others it sounds like the charge of the Light Brigade at their doorstep.

And there's certainly no easy guarantee that the community center can peacefully continue its popular outdoor concerts that maintain it as the community's cultural center and help keep it financially afloat.

Let's face it. Many of the artists drawn to the outdoor concerts, such as flautist Alexander Zonjic — whose music won't reach the top of the hill without amplification — will be hard pressed to give a concert.

Decibel levels, established by experts who would be given the benefit of public opinion, are the only way to resolve and force a real compromise between neighbors and the community center.

We were double-teamed on basketball goal code

The writer, Kathleen Tracy, is a Farmington Hills resident.

guest column

WE WERE told: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Do some people really consider basketball poles decorative? Do they also consider trampled shrubs, flowers and lawns beautiful? How about broken tree branches that won't regenerate?

Council says people must be considered or be prosecuted for property damage, despite statements from residents who experienced continuing damage with no support from the city. Yes, most people are considerate, but enforced laws should protect us against those who are not.

Council also says we should "put children before trees" and we agree, but how did this become an issue?

Playing basketball near trees poses a clear and present danger to the trees (and shrubs and flowers and windows).

Will children be damaged by having their play restricted to their own property? Isn't it more damaging to teach them lack of consideration, which is what we're doing when we erect a pole close to neighboring property?

WE THINK a compromise is in order, one that would permit people to have basketball goals but require them to minimize the visual and physical impact on their neighbors.

Such a compromise existed, but city hall refused to enforce it, then eliminated it altogether, railroading the amendment through rather than suspending a decision until more facts and opinions could be presented.

Nice jump shot, city hall — you made the basket but missed all the points.

from our readers

Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender. Limit letters to 300 words.

Noise is pollution

To the editor:
Regarding the celebration of the

20th anniversary of Earth Day, why is noise (most specifically, multi-laned, high-speed interstate highway/expressway traffic noise) no longer considered to be a pollution problem also?

Joan Barber,
Farmington Hills

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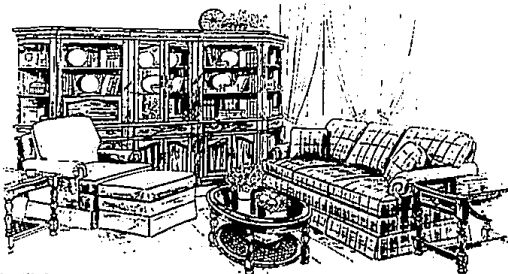
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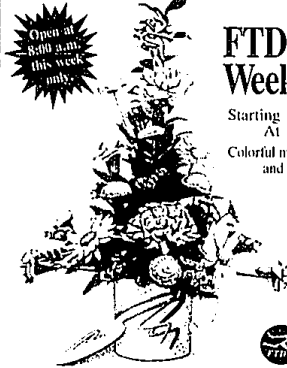


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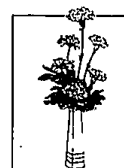
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