

Opinion

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Robert Sklar editor / 477-5450

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O&E Monday, May 14, 1990

Carrington Place Review management change

RIGHT ON, Mayor Fox. The city council should revisit what's going on at Carrington Place Apartments, that alling Farmington Hills housing project for moderate- to low-income senior adults.

At the heart of our concern is the change in management companies less than two months after the city approved a yearly tax break of more than two-thirds.

The timing of the management change, from Detroit Baptist Manor to PM Diversified, bothers us a lot. We're not challenging either company. Both are reputable.

But we think it's strange that City Manager Bill Costick didn't know who would replace Detroit Baptist Manor until we told him. Communication between Carrington owners and city officials surely should be better.

Meanwhile, we're still unclear, even after a call to Lansing, why Detroit Baptist Manor didn't meet Michigan State Housing Development Authority guidelines. We've filed a Freedom of Information request with MSHDA in an effort to find out exactly where Detroit Baptist Manor came up short.

CARRINGTON PLACE opened last August. By December, just 29 of the 100 units, dedicated by covenant for senior housing, had been leased at market rents of \$550 to \$600.

The March tax break limits Carrington to lower-income seniors, who will pay shelter rents of \$401-\$457.

It also let the owners seek a 35-year, low-interest mortgage through MSHDA and thus drop rents for 1990 by \$150-\$200. Future rents will be set by formula. MSHDA will subsidize tenants paying more than 40 percent of income on shelter.

Carrington's annual payment in lieu of taxes will be 4 percent of its net revenue from shelter rents (rent receipts after utility costs).

This year's payout will be \$17,689, well short of the property tax of \$61,000, based on a state equalized value of \$1.2 million. The city's chunk of the \$17,689: roughly \$3,500.

As we stated in March, we're not opposed to the city helping business succeed when justified. But we repeat: This bailout smacks of too much too late.

FARMINGTON HILLS doesn't have enough senior housing. Waiting lists underscore that. But what irked us most about the tax break was that the owners sought it only after they couldn't fill Carrington at market rents, only after a bid for bigger profit failed.

The 11th-hour bailout invites every other senior housing project that runs short of cash to seek a city handout, putting the council in a no-win position.

As we wrote in March, a future "yes" on a similar request could be considered yet another taxpayer subsidy of private enterprise. A future "no" could unwork charges of favoritism toward Carrington.

We want Carrington Place to succeed. It fills a vital need. A tax break seems on target. But at this point, the tax break isn't the issue.

WE'RE NOT sure how much the city council knows about the reason for the change in management. We'd guess it knows very little.

But given the city's vested interest in Carrington's financial state, we hope the council would at least be curious about the management situation at Freedom and Drake.

Aldo Vagnozzi was among the council members who agreed to the tax break partly because Detroit Baptist Manor, which "has an excellent record in the community," would be the management company.

Council members owe it to not only the taxpayers but also themselves to clear the air about the management status of Carrington Place.

In March, we stressed that we don't doubt the integrity of Carrington partner Sam Yaker, who maintains that receipts and outflow won't balance until the fifth year of full occupancy at shelter rents.

But given the city broke precedent in granting him a late tax break, we're sure he understands he's highly susceptible to public scrutiny.

Should parent tattle on off-duty teacher?

Q: I recently saw my son's teacher shopping at an area mall one afternoon at 2 p.m. It was a regularly scheduled school day. She saw me and I know she went out of her way to avoid talking to me. I do volunteer work in her school and see her almost every week. I've heard teachers get personal business days but this didn't look like personal business to me. Should I mention it to her principal?

A: It is impossible to justify playing hooky but it has gone on since I began in education. The majority of teachers and administrators do not abuse the use of their sick or personal business days. But a few do.

However, most teachers and administrators with whom I've worked tend to come to school when they are not feeling well and probably should have stayed home.

The genesis of sick days and personal business days from the pre-teacher contract era to today needs to be reviewed to address your question.

When I started in education back in the 1950s we received three sick days and no personal business days. If you were on your death bed the superintendent had the right to decide if your sickness was legitimate. He then could grant a teacher more than three days. Otherwise, your pay was docked.

When negotiations were legitimized in the 1960s, sick days increased from five up to now 10 per year in most districts. The days also accumulate and can now be carried over. Many teachers have more than 200 days accumulated that they have never used.

Personal business days were then negotiated into the contract, initially one or two a year. These days originally were to be used only for a death in the immediate family and each day had to be approved by the administration.

As years rolled on, the number of personal business days increased up to four and could be used for other situations where a teacher is not in control of setting the dates and times (for example a doctor's appointment). In many of today's contracts teachers do not have to declare what personal business they are going to the victim. It is their business and it would be considered unethical to infer a teacher would ever play hooky as some kids do.

Frankly, as a teacher and administrator, there were a couple days it seemed I was mentally and physically burned out and I did stay home.



Doc Doyle

However, those days were few and far between.

Unfortunately, there are a few educators who view both sick days and personal business days as vacation days. Having reviewed attendance patterns of staff members for years, they are easy to identify.

The most famous day to be sick is a non-payday Friday. This choice grants the long weekend and the next Friday to pick up the check. Days just prior to vacations also are popular. Deer hunting season often causes another period of extended illness.

Teachers who abuse this fringe benefit think only the building principal and central office are concerned. Wrong. Teachers within each building know who the abusers are as do union leaders. And although they say nothing to their face, they have strong personal opinions that are expressed in private.

Since you wonder about your child's teacher being in the mall at 2 p.m., you have choices. You can mention it to her, mention it to her principal or decide it is none of your business. You say she is an excellent teacher, seldom absent, so consider these factors before making your decision.

Dr. James Doyle is a former assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

from our readers

Pay equity bills needed

To the editor:

I'd like to urge all male readers to undergo a sex change. Simply imagine earning 35 percent less for the work you do.

Now perhaps you'll write your state legislators about supporting the two-pay equity bills currently before the Michigan House Labor Committee (HB 4150 and HB 4151).

Pay equity. Ontario has it. And progressive companies such as IBM have it. It's time the women of Michigan have it, too.

Timothy Lachowski,
Farmington Hills

System may slight victims

To the editor:

The victims of crime deserve a criminal justice system that punishes criminals, not victims. Too often, our system does on the

defendant while being insensitive to the anguish and hardship it visits on the victim.

The recent National Victims' Rights Week, April 22-28, gave us an opportunity to focus public attention on this deficiency in our system and to promote a greater awareness of the actions we have taken to correct it.

The Michigan Constitution and the Crime Victims' Rights Act now guarantee certain rights to crime victims.

Among these are the right to actively participate in the prosecution of the case, including the right to speak at the defendant's sentencing.

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office has a Victim/Witness Assistance Unit to inform victims of their rights and assist them in exercising those rights. It can be contacted at 858-0707.

We should rededicate ourselves to improve the justice system for victims.

We need to assure that sufficient resources are given to law enforcement to help them cope with their traumatic experience.

Richard Thompson,
Oakland County prosecutor

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ARTHROSCOPY OF THE SHOULDER
You may be aware of the technique for looking directly into the knee with a scope, called arthroscopy. This device permits orthopedists to see and even repair knee damage which, in the past, required an open operation. Arthroscopy also is available for the shoulder.
A number of conditions involve the tendons, cartilage, and capsule surrounding the shoulder joint. In the past, diagnosis of tears and dislocations of these structures depended on x-ray techniques, which often failed to reveal the presence of these problems. Furthermore, following diagnosis, the patient faced the need for an extensive and long operation.
Shoulder arthroscopy permits the physician to see the structures of the joint clearly and in certain cases undertake immediate repair.
However, arthroscopy is expensive and complications such as bleeding and infection can follow from it. In addition, shoulder arthroscopy requires the patient to go under general anesthesia, which itself can be a hazard. Thus, arthroscopy is in order only after traditional methods of treatment and diagnosis have failed.
Still, the availability of this procedure provides hope for a return of function and a freedom from pain when previously no such expectations were possible.

Men, if you're about to turn 18, it's time to register with Selective Service at any U.S. Post Office.
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