

Opinion

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Yes to parks Millage deserves support

LET US add our name to the list of those supporting the proposed half-mill renewal for parks and recreation in Farmington Hills.

And what a long and impressive list it is, containing the name of just about everyone who is anyone in this community from the state senator and representative to our mayor to an outspoken backyard naturalist to the local youth soccer honcho.

These important people are urging a yes vote on the parks millage question in the special election Tuesday, May 7.

Let's hope that enough of the city's little people — the ordinary Joes and Janes who really pay the freight around here — agree and add their yes votes Tuesday so that progress in the parks department may continue.

Actually, there is no reason why this millage shouldn't pass. Voters in 1986 approved the half-mill levy to initiate a park system in a suburban community that badly needed one.

Looking back, it would seem that the money has been well spent.

HERITAGE PARK, something of a nature preserve and the jewel of the system, has been developed (granted, some would say overdeveloped; you know who you are) to include nature and hiking trails, picnic areas, shelters, comfort stations and the like. We've heard lots of praise and very few negative words about Heritage Park from the general public.

But lots more needs to be accomplished in this city where there is little undeveloped land left for parks. Officials, armed with a millage renewal, say they want to:

- Acquire and develop land (a bid has been made to buy a former sod farm on Eight Mile Road) for ballfields, thus keeping them out of Heritage and at last healing the rift between the nature preserve and ballgame facilities.
- Build a bicycle path to link Heritage and

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Pioneer parks and start bike routes in several city neighborhoods.

- Lease or build a facility so that cultural programs for activities senior citizens may be expanded.

- Provide vehicles so that senior citizens can be taken to and from the activities.

- Develop access, parking, nature trails and "minor amenities" on the Peltz-MDOT property in the Farmington Road/1-696 area.

- Look into the possible expansion of city-owned San Marino golf course from nine to 18 holes.

- Provide a facility and programs for the needs of the community's teenagers.

CITY OFFICIALS, to their credit, seem to have co-opted the few vocal critics of the parks policies to the point where they showed up (the lions lay down with the lambs, so to speak) at a press conference Monday to urge that the millage be approved.

It would be great to see this same community-wide support and co-operation continue in the months and years to come as Heritage is finished off, Peltz-MDOT is developed and the important teen and senior programs are strengthened.

Farmington Hills has come a long way parks-wise from the early '70s, when the general attitude was: "In this kind of community, the parks system is the backyard of every home." A yes vote in Tuesday's election would help the progress continue.

A final note: Emotions are still running high in the Farmington area from the failed school millage election in February. We hope voters will separate the issues when they go to the polls Tuesday, May 7. They truly are separate issues.

Waste plan Bond issue may go to voters

OKLAND'S COUNTY Commissioners have finally come to their senses. After months of indecision and hand-wringing, they're warming up to the idea of consulting voters about the proposed solid waste program — including its incinerator in Auburn Hills.

The decision to put the issue before voters has not been finalized. Not formally, anyway. But commissioners began discussing the possibility this week, and indications are they will reverse a decision made last year and ask residents to vote on bonding the \$500 million project, possibly in August.

It's about time. Literally thousands of hours — with input from hundreds, experts as well as average citizens — have gone into preparing the proposed solid waste program, with its ambitious recycling goals and controversial incineration. It's the most ambitious — and costly — project in county history.

LAST JULY when commissioners decided against putting the project to the voters, several individuals, including county board chairman Roy Rewold, voiced concerns that the topic is too complicated and too important to leave to the voters.

They were concerned the vote itself — officially on bonding the solid waste program, backed by the county's full faith and credit — will be viewed as a referendum on the incinerator. Officials worry voters will misinterpret the issue — and vote it down.

In other words, Oakland residents are either

too dumb, too ill-informed or too apathetic to be trusted with such a major decision.

That kind of reasoning is offensive, if not insulting. Oakland undoubtedly has its share of people who won't bother to grapple with the solid waste issue. Others simply won't care.

But there are also a larger number who do care. There's a larger number of Oakland residents who don't want commissioners making such a major decision without their direct input via the ballot box.

Oakland voters are up to the task of looking at the solid waste program intelligently and objectively. They are capable of sifting through the relevant information and making a thoughtful decision.

Commissioners should have decided to put the solid waste program before voters a long time ago.

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Denying drink violates rights

WAITERS AND waitresses have no right to deny service to a customer, as did the Seattle pair who recently tried to dissuade a pregnant woman from drinking an alcoholic beverage.

The wisdom of the woman's action in ordering the drink was questionable. Given a similar circumstance, it probably wouldn't have been our choice. It might not be yours, either.

But the woman in question had every right to demand service.

Denying her the drink violated her civil rights, plain and simple.

There are health concerns about mixing pregnancy and alcohol. But even obstetricians disagree about the relative danger posed by a single drink.

Obstetricians are experts in the field. Waiters and waitresses are not. The Seattle pair's actions were based on personal conviction, however noble, but not on expertise and certainly not on

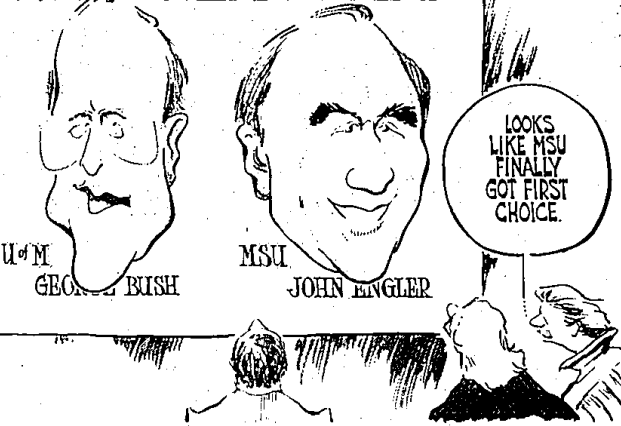
law. Denying service to a customer on the individual beliefs of a salesperson sets a dangerous precedent.

Following that line of reasoning, it would be entirely permissible for sporting goods store employee to deny selling a shotgun because he or she opposed hunting. It would be entirely permissible for a magazine store clerk to deny selling Playboy, Soldier of Fortune or even Christianity Today because he or she disapproved of the magazine's content. It would be entirely permissible for a drug store clerk to deny selling condoms because he or she disapproved of birth control.

This is not the kind of society to promote.

Whether a pregnant woman drinks should be her decision, in line with the advice of her doctor. It shouldn't be the responsibility of bar owners, waitresses, bar tenders, or, for that matter, anyone else.

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS



Detroit's mayor must reach beyond the city

TWO WEEKS AGO, Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young said that suburbanites were the main opponents of demolishing city landmarks like Ford Auditorium because they wanted to block economic development in the city and reveal in the ruins.

Last week, Detroit voters turned down by a substantial margin the project to demolish the auditorium and use the site for a hotel/bank headquarters/other unspecified big building that would bring jobs to the city.

Maybe, just maybe, the voters in Detroit are beginning to get the same idea that suburbanites have had for a long time: Coleman A. Young may once have been a great mayor. But that was long ago, and today he's badly out of touch.

SUBURBAN BASHING has been a staple in the mayor's political style for many years. The suburbs have been "hostile," "wanted Detroit to die" and would have been a good place to "run criminals to."

Some people treated this kind of rhetoric with half-amused tolerance, reasoning that such racial rabble rousing was the price the mayor had to pay for continued support at the polls.

But a lot of people who were born and grew up in Detroit and who moved out to the suburbs because

the city was falling apart took this kind of language pretty hard.

They didn't move to Farmington because they were "hostile," they moved because Detroit schools had become impossible and because nobody seemed to care about trying to improve them. They didn't buy a house in Rochester because they wanted the city which sustained their families to "die," they left because there were no more jobs in the city, because city services could not sustain them and because the pervasive crime made keeping a store open a dangerous occupation.

In fact, it now appears clear that a major consequence of Mayor Young's rhetoric is to have driven out of Detroit precisely the kind of people who are now most needed to save it: educated, businesslike, community-oriented families, whether white or black.

OBVIOUSLY, that's too bad. It's stupid, too, because one of the elementary rules of politics is not to bite the hand that could feed you.

Many people who moved from Detroit to the suburbs, often in deep and intense ways, still regard Detroit as their city. Many people who treasure memories of the Detroit that used to be would be only too happy to help save the city, if only somebody in authority asked in a sensible and mature way.



Philip Power

But that's precisely what Coleman Young's rhetorical history makes it impossible for him to do.

I am convinced that Coleman Young, deep down, wants to ask the suburbs for help. But there's too much history, too many verbs over the dam, to make the request credible.

That's why the next mayor of Detroit, whoever he or she might be, has got to reach out to the entire region for help, beginning with the election in 1993.

That invitation might even go down pretty well with the voters in Detroit. After all, they voted down the mayor's rhetoric last week. And faced with the choice of living in an isolated city that's failing and a regional city that's coming back, they might well choose economic self-interest over racial politics.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

Consent law proves scary

PARDON ME if I'm a little bit confused, but that parental consent bill that got railroaded into Michigan law is causing all kinds of problems.

I have it. The bill, if you recall, was worked on in the Legislature, massaged, tampered with, amended . . . all part of the normal legislative process . . . and finally passed and sent to the governor.

The guy — Jimmy Blanchard at the time — vetoed it.

Then the pro-life forces went on a signature-gathering campaign and collected enough John Hancock's to force the Legislature to reconsider the bill. If they passed it based on the voters' initiative, which they subsequently did, it would be veto-proof.

The only catch was that the bill could not be modified from its original form — and that version included a provision that would allow girls to petition the probate court for a waiver of parental consent and another provision that schools would be required to inform students in grades six through 12 of the existence of the law, the address and phone number of the local probate court and how to contact the court for assistance under the law.

So it passed, lawsuits to keep it from going into effect failed and schools were sent copies of the forms they were required to pass out to students informing them of their rights under the law.

Now everybody's yowling and howling and coming out of the closet.

LOTS OF PARENTS, teachers, school administrators and board members are protesting the forms that have been sent to the schools to



Jack Gladden

distribute to students.

"We don't want to do this," they're saying. "We think it's wrong."

Well, folks, some of you wanted a parental consent law and you got it.

And you can't just choose to enforce the part you like and ignore the part you don't like. (Although the pro-life forces in the Legislature are trying to do just that. They've introduced a bill in the Senate to delete that section of the law requiring schools to pass out the controversial forms.)

THEN THERE'S the judges' Can you believe some of them?

One judicial dude out in Clinton County said if any young women come to him seeking abortions, the first thing he would do would be to appoint a guardian for the fetus!

He based his decision in part on a proclamation signed by then President Ronald Reagan that said medical technology "proves" that fetuses

are human beings with a right to life. Now there's judicial precedent for you.

Then there's the Kalamazoo County judge who dismissed a 17-year-old girl's petition for an abortion and said the whole law was unconstitutional.

And now a Mason County judge has really stirred things up by saying that he resents the law and thinks that abortions should only be allowed in some cases — such as incest or the rape of a white girl by a black man.

He's got the American Civil Liberties Union, the Michigan Abortion Rights Action League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People all after him.

SO WHAT'S IT all about, anyway? I think Carol King, the executive director of the Michigan Abortion Rights Action League, summed it up pretty well.

"It seems that one beneficial side effect of this horrible law has been to expose the bigotry and small-mindedness that we knew was there and now the general public is seeing it," she said.

Of course, I think this exceeds even our worst expectations.

That's for sure. When you get judges, officers of the court who are sworn to uphold the Constitution and the law, saying publicly that they don't like this particular law and just aren't going to comply with it, that's more than small-mindedness. That's scary as hell.

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