

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336 Tom Baer editor/477-5450

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Keep trying! Schools need challengers

RICHARD DeVRIES says he'll be back. Good for you, Mr. DeVries. And good for the Farmington Schools.

DeVries — the man they love to hate up on Shilwassee Hill — was also-ran in the recent Farmington School Board election. But the two-time loser said he won't be banished to obscurity, although many in the community would wish it so.

Running on a "fiscal responsibility" platform in the June 10 election, he pulled 906 votes to finish a distant second behind board President Susan Rennels, who had 1,573. Laura Myers landed third with 423.

The voters of the Farmington District did not mispeak when they re-elected Rennels to a third term on the board of education. She knows what she's doing, or should after all these years. The district is fortunate to have her on board.

But DeVries, a Ford Motor Co. engineer who seems to be building a following in the new subdivisions of western Farmington Hills, told us he'll try again next year.

Myers, on the other hand, said she probably

won't run next year, but will continue as a board-watcher.

GOOD AND good. The district needs board-watchers and people willing to take on the established order, even if failure is almost certain against a powerful, entrenched opponent.

Now, Richard DeVries asked some tough questions about our schools in the past couple of campaigns. At times he asked them in an abrasive, caustic manner, thus running afoul of the school establishment and its supporters. But he asked the questions just the same.

People like DeVries and Myers are needed to challenge the status quo in local government. We want to see more people willing to get involved, ask hard questions, expect good answers and maybe even knock off an undeserving incumbent or two come election time.

It's good for business . . . the public business of running our schools and cities. It never hurts to question authority. That's how we get at new ideas. That's how we learn the truth. That's how we move ahead.

Olde Town is not for hoops

THE CITY COUNCIL did the right thing recently when it voted to remove the basketball hoops from Olde Town Park in southern Farmington Hills.

Not that we have anything against basketball or basketball players, but basketball isn't the issue here.

If you believe area residents — and we do — the courts at Olde Town (formerly Waldron) Park were getting to be a gathering place for teens and others who often brought trouble with them.

We believe public parks should not be staging areas for troublesome people, not in Farmington Hills, not anywhere.

ACCORDING TO residents, the courts were the cause of increased traffic, an influx of loud

and profane youths from outside the area and even some drug dealing.

Some parents said they were afraid to let their smaller children use the park at Waldron and Independence. The older kids were running off the younger ones.

"We and our neighbors have had to put up with foul language, fights, lack of parking for guests, noise, vandalism . . . and outright fear for the kids and property," resident Wanda Schicker told council during a lively session.

So council voted 6-0 to haul down the hoops — and probably offered a collective silent prayer that its action would solve the problem.

As we said, it was a good move. It's a fine state of affairs when a nice little neighborhood park becomes a liability to homeowners.

Warning:

Don't hide behind closed doors

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY needs close scrutiny from the public and its campus constituencies in the months ahead.

First, we note that the Society of Professional Journalists has honored Professor Jane Briggs-Bunting for winning a Freedom of Information Act suit against her own employer.

OU had attempted to hide reports on campus crime from the student newspaper, Briggs-Bunting, an attorney and advisor to the Oakland Post, won national attention with her successful case late in 1990. SPJ labeled her "Journalist of the Year" for her public services.

The case should serve as a warning to all 15 state universities and 29 community colleges that you can't hide information on crime under the false shroud of "student information."

SECOND, The resignation of Joseph Champagne as president brings to mind the secretive way he was hired by a previous OU Board of Trustees.

The 1980 board split into sub-quorum groups, interviewed presidential candidates behind closed doors in a Metro Airport hotel more than 40 miles from campus where scrutiny could be

minimized and announced the new president during final exams, assuring a minimal audience.

This is not to say the choice of Champagne was bad. Indeed he has made a mark with the Oakland Technology Park and respectable lobbying for research funds.

But the 1980 board did Champagne a disservice with its neurotic secrecy followed by a lawsuit.

THE FULL OU board should interview all finalists for president in an open meeting, on campus, at a convenient time for its public. The Open Meetings Act requires it. The general public and university community can be sure all candidates are asked the same questions, without discrimination. The board is forced to reveal its own agenda.

The experience of Oakland Community and Schoolcraft colleges shows another major advantage of open interviews. College candidates tend to like the same candidate that the board likes.

It would be a great benefit to Champagne's successor to be greeted warmly by everyone and not just a board of trustees facing a lawsuit over its secrecy.

Recycling

Can we help environment?

IT'S RARE THESE days that we find ourselves praising those in government for accomplishments that show both foresight and a measure of self-sacrifice on the part of the governed.

That alone makes local programs to improve the environment in western Wayne and Oakland Counties praiseworthy.

We're talking, of course, about recycling. Virtually every community covered by the Observer & Eccentric has launched an effort to change the way residents dispose of trash. Most programs have been implemented within the last year or two or are coming on-line during 1991.

Municipalities have drop-off recycling centers. Some also have curbside recycling and composting.

Farmington Hills and Livonia began their curbside programs in July and others are to follow later this year.

A dwindling number of Michigan landfills and mounting concerns over incineration make these efforts necessary. New county and state laws re-

garding solid waste disposal are also forcing the hand of local governments.

BUT THAT DOESN'T change the fact that elected officials in cities and townships — many of whom serve only part-time — have had to struggle with this often complicated and costly technology. Politics has, for the most part, taken a back seat to the genuine desire for cleaner, greener communities.

And of course none of this would work without patience and cooperation from residents — something we've also noted.

Separating cans from bottles, plastic from glass and peeling labels can be a tedious task when you're used to just mindlessly throwing it all at the curb on garbage day. Most people seem to be adapting well, although residents in some communities have been a little slow off the mark.

Change is never easy. We're all fortunate that recycling seems to be a change most are willing to make.

PHYSICIANS



State lacks resolve in helping unemployed

"IT'S A FURTHER segregating of the haves and the have-nots. That's the way Garden City school Superintendent Mike Wilmut so aptly describes the most recent fiasco out of Lansing, a tax base sharing plan that divides the Wolverine State into three oddly shaped segments.

For those with a straight edge, draw the line directly along Eight Mile Road, from Lake St. Clair to Lake Michigan, and you've outlined the ghettoization of a state, the segregation of an entire region, a state established apartheid-like redistribution, all in one fell swoop.

For years now, a group of folks have been trying to figure out how to surgically remove Detroit and its surroundings from the rest of Michigan. Now they've used school financing as an excuse to execute their fondest dream.

It's sick, really sick. Michiganders are desperate for relief. Economically, this state is going to ruin. The state deficit looms around \$900 million. Unemployment is a crushing 9.6 percent and our sugar and daddy, the American automobile business, is on the ropes.

YET OUR BUSINESS and government leaders refuse to move their heads from the sand and deal effectively with Michigan's future. Instead they want to play a shell game with your children's education and pretend that's going to solve the inequities between school systems.

We've got a problem all right. But

We've got a problem all right. But it's not school financing or property taxes or even the lagging American auto industry. Those are all symptoms of a much more lethal and disturbing malady.



Steve Barnaby

dice any longer.

And shame on short-sighted business leaders who believe it's good for their company to add to the ranks of the unemployed.

Working people pay income tax, buy homes, pay property taxes, buy cars, pay sales tax. Unemployed people don't.

They are forced to depend on money from already over-utilized government coffers.

Imagine if each of 800,000 unemployed went back to work and paid state income tax of, say \$600, just \$600. That's an additional \$480 million in state coffers.

Putting the unemployed back to work also would bring great relief to the overburdened state budget.

But employing people isn't a priority among the power brokers in this state. That would take initiative and imagination. They would rather dazzle us with mirrors.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

from our readers

Editorial was way off base

To the editor:
I was surprised that your newspaper, after doing an excellent job in coverage of the recent school board election, took to berating those volunteers who were exercising their constitutional right by distributing campaign literature at the polls. (Editorial, June 13)

Literature distribution at the polls is not only protected by the Constitution but is provided for by law which sets a 100-foot minimum distance from the poll entrance in which such distribution can take place.

You argue that people refuse to vote because they do not want to face the literature distributors. I don't buy that. There are several reasons why people don't vote, but that isn't one of them.

While I put distributing literature at the polls as the least effective of all campaign activities, I always accept what is offered, read it and properly dispose of it before entering the poll. The voter also has the option of politely refusing the literature.

I am well aware that these distributors are volunteers. Without such activity and other campaign doings we probably would have an even smaller turnout than the low figures

we post in local and school board elections.

I can remember when there was opposition to the use of lawn signs. It is now an accepted practice in the Farmington area. I am also aware that hand distribution of literature is a poor candidate's way of campaigning. These are the candidates who do not get the big contributions that would allow them to mail literature to every home in the district.

Sometimes the candidate stands at the poll. This is a wonderful opportunity for the prospective voters to meet the candidate and possibly ask questions about the issues. I know the value of these encounters because I've been there.

Aldo Vagnozzi, Farmington Hills

to the suburbs they are a hazard on our clean, well-kept roads.

The police are only doing their jobs to keep our city from becoming another "Coleman" junkyard.

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Keep Farmington beautiful, safe and junk free.

Timothy A. Day, Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others in the From Our Readers column.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words. Letters must be signed, and include the address of the sender.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Keep town 'junk free'

To the editor:
The article on the NAACP's probe into our city's police department stinks to the least.

I hope to God that Chief William Dwyer doesn't bow or turn the other cheek.

They drive in Junk cars. In Detroit, the police do nothing. Of course, Detroit is nothing, so when they come

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