

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336

Tom Baer editor/477-5450

O&E Thursday, August 22, 1991

Good skates Don't halt the young rollers

GOOD SHOW... way to go... thumbs up... a tip of the old fedora to the Farmington Hills City Council deserves a little praise (not too loud, please) for proving at a recent meeting that it's not a mean old Grinch of a governmental body.

The Hills council, we're happy to report, turned a unanimous thumbs down to a request from local school officials to regulate skateboarding, rollerblading and roller skating on school property.

"Apparently the schools, concerned about safety and liability, wanted the cities to pass ordinances that would keep skateboarders off school property. No way, said the Hills. Farmington's council has introduced — but not yet adopted — such an ordinance.

Skateboarding, for years the rage with the young and the young at heart, has expanded recently into rollerblading (on something like ice skates with little wheels in the blades) and roller skating (with rollers in the skis).

Sporting goods stores do a good business in these items and the things that go with them — helmets and pads for the knees and elbows.

BUT WHERE oh where to use these wheeled wonders? Well, before strapping them on, a little common sense should be employed.

No, you can't skateboard down the middle of Orchard Lake Road or Grand River (even though you might beat the motorized traffic during some rush hours), and nix on wheeling along the sidewalks of downtown Farmington where you might collide with a pedestrian. The police'll nab you if you try something that foolish.

The whole idea is to enjoy this equipment while not hurting yourself or bothering others.

But what's wrong with a roll across an empty parking lot at the local elementary school after hours in the company of other like-minded sportsmen and women? Absolutely nothing, we think.

Somebody finally found a use for an empty parking lot. There should be a civic award.

Hey, how about that... somebody finally found a use for an empty parking lot. There should be a civic award.

Hills councilman Ben Marks said a skateboarding law would add to the woes of young people who often complain that "there's nothing to dooooooo around here."

SAID MARKS at the meeting, "I can't see a thing wrong with a young person using a parking lot after hours. I think we're sending the wrong message to our young people."

And let's be honest about it: Our police have better things to do these days than rust around 12-year-olds who are peacefully using what the sporting goods stores so readily sell to their parents.

"On the one hand, there's a safety issue involved," said Larry Lichtman, another Hills councilman. "On the other hand... I guess I'd rather have the police out there trying to make more drug busts."

Well, there's one thing you can say about skateboarding: It sure beats sitting in front of a TV set watching cartoons after school and on Saturdays. Skateboarding takes place in the fresh air and involves exercise.

"You burn up 9.5 calories a minute when you're rollerblading," said a Farmington Hills girl who's bonkers over the activity.

No, officials don't should object when skateboarders wheel through the empty parking lots. It's a good show, as long as they don't bother others. We're happy that the Farmington Hills City Council seemed to realize that when it rejected the plea for the skateboard law.

Tuition cap Controls won't hold rates low

HOUSE SPEAKER Lewis Dodak and some Democratic leaders were seeking publicity and sending a message — we hope — with their price control proposal for college tuitions.

Their idea is to seek a constitutional amendment limiting annual tuition and fee increases at state universities to the rate of consumer price inflation. Voters would have to approve.

If their goal is to rattle the cages of university boards, which this summer have jacked up fall rates 6.5 to 20.4 percent, fine.

BUT IF TUITION caps are intended as serious public policy, the plan shows economic, historical and political illiteracy about price controls.

• Tuition hikes would be limited to the consumer price index (CPI). But the CPI is irrelevant to colleges, which use a higher education price index (HEPI). Colleges don't shop at the same grocery stores as families.

• Price controls don't work. They didn't work for the fourth century Roman Emperor Diocletian. Price controls didn't work for 70 years in the Soviet Union, resulting in a notorious black market. Price controls were the object of mirth in World War II and the subject of evasion when President Nixon tried them in 1971.

• If imposed, tuition caps would prompt universities to pare costs by offering fewer laboratory courses and more textbook-only courses. The quantity and quality of higher education would be diluted.

control mechanisms that all skilled politicians know about.

First, the governor appoints members of 10 university boards. Former Gov. James Blanchard could have used his power in the mid-1980s to boot out Oakland University trustees who voted for tuition rates he considered too high. Instead, he reappointed them.

Second, state party conventions nominate candidates for the three largest university boards. If tuition hikes are so serious a problem, both parties' delegates could use tuition caps as a "litmus test" on candidates for the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State boards. So far, they haven't even tried.

Third, parents and grandparents who have enrolled young children in the Michigan Education Trust, a pre-paid college tuition plan, should have a vested interest in keeping tuitions low. As voters, they have enough money to decide university board races, which in Michigan are typically tight. As political activists, they could have even more clout.

THERE'S NO chance in the world that a two-thirds majority of both chambers of the Legislature will put Dodak's proposal on the 1992 ballot. The speaker would waste his debt-plagued party's scarce resources by trying a petition drive.

The best — perhaps only — chance of holding down tuition rates is through political leadership. Candidates and parents should make tuition caps an issue at the 1992 Democratic and Republican state conventions, persuading one party or both to nominate candidates who will pledge to hold down tuitions as much as is feasible.

Amendments regulate power of federal, state government

Amendment IX — The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X — The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

UNLIKE THE specific restraints of amendments one through eight, the Ninth and Tenth amendments hint that there may be limits on the government's

power beyond those already specified. The Ninth amendment recognizes the personal rights that may be entitled to constitutional protection from government interference. The Tenth also acknowledges the basic political principle that all powers belong to the people.

Only those powers delegated by the people may be exercised by the government either federal or state. Thus the Bill of Rights ends on the note sounded at the Constitution's beginning — affirming the sovereign power of "We, the People."

This is another in a continuing series marking the anniversary of the Bill of Rights.



Fear keeps suburban residents out of city

FEAR IS a depressing emotion. Consider a recent poll conducted by Schoolcraft College. The poll reveals suburbanites are more frightened than ever at the thought of traveling into the city of Detroit.

The poll's questioner noted the effect of the widely publicized beating of two suburban women following the Freedom Festival fireworks. The beatings, recorded on videotape, made national headlines.

A whopping 63.9 percent of the 400 persons surveyed said they were less likely to visit the city because of the Freedom Festival incidents. More than 70 percent believed that police protection in Detroit is less than adequate.

An indication of the depth of fear is that more than 78.3 percent of those questioned admitted that the city of Detroit has a reputation for being a scary place.

In what a pitiful state we find ourselves. WE ARE prisoners of our own paranoia.

Surrounded by our dream homes, with manicured lawns, crowded freeways and out-of-control property taxes, we have abandoned perfectly fine cultural and recreational facilities for the lure of strip malls and rarely-used common areas.

We have so depleted our resources that we are unable to duplicate the facilities abandoned to the ravages of urban blight.

A whopping 63.9 percent of the 400 persons surveyed said they were less likely to visit the city because of the Freedom Festival incidents. More than 70 percent believed that police protection in Detroit is less than adequate.

For decades, those who could afford the fare, have bought a ticket on the white-flight express, confident in the knowledge that they were making a down payment on a piece of the American dream.

But as reality has closed in, the dream is revealed to be a little more than tarnished. A once familiar city whose streets we walked, whose facilities we enjoyed, and in which we invested millions of dollars has been allowed to disintegrate into what most would perceive as a haven for crime.

A COLLEAGUE and I were recently exchanging views on the mutual admiration we share for Detroit's sister city on the Great Lakes, Chicago. The envy oozed from our every word.



Steve Barnaby

Certainly, the windy city has its flaws, every urban area does. But the leadership of metropolitan Chicago continues to support its core. The people follow that lead. And it shows in both the amenities offered by downtown Chicago and the attitude which emanates from those who live and do business in that area.

Unfortunately, we suffer from a crippling case of inferiority. In a recent exchange with several influential hoteliers, I was shocked to hear them all readily surrender to the idea that "Detroit is no Chicago," that we never will be able to create the same kind of business in this town.

And we never will if we continue to abandon what we have built.

Now is the time to play the monster called fear and take control of the valuable resource which pumps economic prosperity into this region.

Steve Barnaby is the managing editor of the 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

from our readers

No bad news for Gill

To the editor: I feel it imperative to address your article in which some of the facts were not presented in a totally clear manner. Your "Good News" is correct, the situation will be in that class at the start of the school year. However, the "Bad News" portion of the article is incorrect.

The six classrooms addition and media center was initially planned for a late November completion. During the planning and bidding phase, this schedule was improved upon, to reflect a November 4th occupancy. At the present time, we are within one week of our scheduled opening.

Early indications point to the possibility that this area may be complete earlier than our forecast. If anything, this area should be considered ahead of schedule.

We apologize that the background information was not clearly portrayed in this past month's report.

The administrative office addition schedule was affected by a three week delay, but it is hoped that this area will be available for the start of the school.

Our report to the board was a positive report, the only "bad news" was the gym floor will not be complete until the first week of September. As

stated in our report, this should not present a severe impact on the district's program because students will be given their physical education outdoors.

Your newspaper has previously been very accurate in reporting the facts. We thought this letter would provide you with additional background information, to better report the status of the Gill Project. A tremendous amount of energy and effort has been expended on this project and a negative report, when it is not justified, dampens the enthusiasm of those involved.

Bill McCarthy, project manager

Sidewalks to be shared

To the editor: The city council's myopic, intolerant, blameworthy approach to the problem of skateboards, rollerblades, and rollerblades on city sidewalks, has been exposed by your editorial.

Downtown Farmington, a historical village struggling to maintain a small town persona, should be encouraging the use of its sidewalks by its citizens — of all ages. What is more American than city sidewalks

shared by young and old alike? What is more vital to the health of a city than sidewalks with people on them? With people on sidewalks come strollers, wagons, bicycles, scooters, rollerblades, skateboards, and now rollerblades.

With common courtesy and recognition of everyone's right to use them, sidewalks are wide enough to be shared by all. Intolerance of others' rights should not be civic policy. If a lack of courtesy is the problem, let's attack that problem.

One or two police officers on foot issuing tickets will address the causes for the lack of courtesy. A fine and/or required pickup of the offender at the police station will wake parents up to the fact that their child needs some parental guidance. And a few hours of required community service will increase the offender's awareness that they are not the only ones in the world, or on city sidewalks for that matter.

We spend so much money, time and effort trying to keep our children from vice and truancy. Chasing our children from city sidewalks to address a simple problem of citizenship is extreme and counterproductive. It is reminiscent to the late sixties tactics of attacking long hair, blue jeans, and short skirts.

I urge the City Council to step back and rethink this issue. It is our best interest to demonstrate that we can share the sidewalks.

David L. York, Farmington Hills

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor
Judith Doner Berne assistant managing editor
Dick Ickham general manager
Mark Lewis director of advertising
Fred Wright director of circulation

Suburban Communications Corp.
Philip Power chairman of the board
Richard Agninin president