

Parks spat

People should listen, learn

The sad thing about this never-ending squabble over the Farmington area's parklands is that neither side seems to listen to (or learn from) the other. And that's unfortunate because both sides have valid points to make about how the parks should be used and what should happen to the last remaining undeveloped spaces in the community. The city of Farmington Hills has ideas about its parks. Some residents, who say they're concerned about overdevelopment, have other ideas. The best thinking from both sides should somehow be combined into a workable policy on parks. Ah, but that's not happening in Farmington Hills these days. Parks and their use is a divisive issue. Of great concern lately is the city-owned Peltz-MDOT property (recently renamed Woodland Hills Park), a wild and woody stretch of land south of I-690 and west of Farmington Road. To say Woodland Hills is unspoiled is an understatement. You stand in its midst and you could imagine yourself deep in the Upper Peninsula — were it not for the traffic roar on the nearby expressway. Still, Woodland Hills is a real treasure in populated and paved-over Farmington Hills, as is the larger Heritage Park about a mile to the south.

The parks debate heated up last week when the city council approved a plan to sink a sewer line on the southern edge of Woodland Hills. The city has good reason for placing the line on parkland instead of on an adjacent vacant lot: There are trees on the vacant lot — the city has a tree ordinance — and just scrub growth on the parkland. Still, the city council's decision on the sewer line was made without much advance publicity. The council agenda didn't say anything about Peltz-MDOT or parks — and that's what seemed to tick off parks advocates like Joe Derek, Roy Lindhardt and Masha Silver. To them, it wasn't so much that a sewer line was going in on park land, it was that, in their opinion, council tried to sneak it past. This sort of thing has happened before between council and Derek and company. The council never seems to learn. When it comes to parks in Farmington Hills, everything must be open and above board. Now Derek and Lindhardt say they'll quit the Peltz-MDOT Ad Hoc Committee, which was set up by the city to diffuse anger over parks. Of course, they could do more to make a rosy future for the city's parks by staying on the inside and working with the establishment. Apparently they haven't learned that. People should just listen and learn.

Aid in curtailing spouse abuse

Most police officers will tell you that spouse abuse, or "family trouble" calls, are among the most common and the most dangerously unpredictable they handle. Conversely, arrests and full-scale prosecution in such cases are about as rare as the calls are routine. That paradox isn't just a "women's issue," and the state Legislature may be about to recognize it, none too soon. A series of bills on domestic violence is winding its way through the Legislature. Taken as a whole, the proposed legislation places greater responsibility on police departments, prosecutors and judges in pursuing spouse abuse cases. The bills propose these major changes: • Easier arrest warrants, requiring a judge or magistrate to act on information from police — with or without the victim's consent to press charges. • Stricter sentencing guidelines — cutting the number of "second chances" for a convicted spouse abuser from two to one before jail time could be assigned. • Mandatory sharing of information between police and judges on previous assault convictions before sentencing. • Allowing probate courts to order an adult out of a home where a child has been abused. One of the bills even addresses the money needed to pay for the changes by bumping marriage license fees from \$20 to \$30 and allocating the difference to domestic violence shelters. That still leaves unanswered, however, where funding will come from for training of police, prosecutors and judges that should be a part of the package.

The bills would go a long way toward shifting the burden for pursuing these crimes away from the helpless victim and onto more socially aware and trained government agencies where it rightfully belongs. And additional time spent on pursuing these cases will increase costs even further, but that's money well spent in a humane society. We are uneasy over increasing unilateral power of government agencies and would prefer to see changes in this package that would make it easier for battered spouses to press charges. Still, the new bills would go a long way toward shifting the burden for pursuing with these crimes away from the helpless victim and onto more socially aware and trained government agencies where it rightfully belongs. The built-in disadvantages in the current system put victims, particularly women, at a loss. Many legitimate cases never see the light of a courtroom due to threats of additional violence. Many victims learn to "live with it" because removing a bread-winner from the home isn't practical for financial reasons, or even possible because there is no place to go. Spouse abuse crosses all racial, ethnic and economic strata. It could involve your neighbor, it could involve you. Remember, there are times when it is appropriate to be your brother's keeper.

Taking charge



What to do: The state Legislature is kicking around a series of bills that would aid in prosecuting spouse-abuse and offer training to government officials. For an editorial on the subject, see the lower left column on this page.

LETTERS

Gardeners take note

Since its inception in 1981, the Farmington Historical Museum (Gov. Warner Mansion) has had as a very visible asset, the many gardens that surround the home itself. Under the stewardship of Kay Blakeney, the gardens were recreated and restored to their place as a beauty spot in Farmington. During the past 11 years, the gardens have provided many enjoyable hours for strollers, meditators, the occasional visitor and those that are seeking a bit of peace and beauty in a busy day. The gardens have provided the setting for small weddings, family photo sessions, individual pictures and for the pre-prom gathering place for the Farmington High School graduates, their parents and friends. Now all of this is endangered as many of the longtime volunteers have been forced to withdraw. Replacement volunteers have not come forth. This letter is a plea for gardeners and would be gardeners to offer their time to maintain this beauty spot. It has been suggested that we institute and "adopt a garden" plan and we that are responsible for the museum are willing and

would welcome a coordinator or administrator that would oversee such a program. The beauty and success of the museum gardens is a living tribute to the TLC provided by volunteers. The Hill and Dale Garden Club, the North Farmington Garden Club, Farmington Garden Club and others still provide the early plantings. However, the ranks of the individuals that on a weekly basis pull the weeds, trim the shrubs, and snip the blossoms are thinning. The gardens are in peril. If your spirit is moved and your body is willing, there are present volunteers that will provide the guidance to get you started. We will accept any amount of hours. Call to Museum Committee chairman Dick Carvell at 476-6257 if interested. Dick Carvell, Historical Museum

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number. Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Kmart's attitude wrongs kids

Censorship under any guise is a danger to our communities. In the case of Kmart's decision to ban Earvin "Magic" Johnson's book "What you can do to avoid AIDS," the outcome could be fatal for teenagers. Kmart, along with Walgreen drug stores, has decided the book is inappropriate for their shoppers. A Kmart spokesman cited the graphic nature of the book as the reason for the ban. "We're not a bookstore," said the spokesman. Kmart shelves are often lined with cheap Victorian paperbacks, decorated with covers of masculine rogues in the process of de-flowering some innocent maiden. Most refer to that as trash — trash without an ounce of socially redeeming value, trash written to titillate, trash which portrays a total false image of relationships between men and women — but one which sells. Apparently Troy-based Kmart, a leader in the American retail industry, thinks it's appropriate to mislead children but not so good to inform them about a disease which kills. For years Johnson was a sports hero of monumental proportions. Corporate America paid him millions to hawk their products, mainly to children. But all that changed when Johnson announced that he tested HIV positive — the precursor to a fully developed case of AIDS. Young people around our nation were crushed. Johnson, more than anyone else, represented hope to millions of youngsters who otherwise had none. They admired and listened to Johnson because he had defied the odds, overcome racial and class barriers. He was the American dream. Now, short of a miracle cure, which all experts agree isn't even peering over the horizon, Johnson will die of AIDS. All the money, fame and fortune won't save him. But kids still listen to Magic Johnson, and



City Barnaby

now it's corporate America's obligation to carry his very important and lifesaving message. This message may not be as colorful as profitable, but it is more important than any other Johnson has ever carried to his fans. Johnson's book has been endorsed by several very credible organizations, including the American Medical Association, the Children's Defense Fund and the Pediatric AIDS Foundation, among others. Other retail outlets, including Kmart's Waldenbooks subsidiary, carry the book. Kmart executives need to remove their eyes from the bottom line and take a look at all the children in their stores. They, and their parents, deserve to have the message made available to them. AIDS is a disease out of control. The number of victims increase and the only way, absolutely the only way to stem the tide of this modern-day plague, is education. Kmart and other retailers who have decided to yank Johnson's book from their shelves should give it another chance. It could be one of their children who are saved from the death sentence offered up by AIDS. Steve Barnaby is managing editor of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

COMMUNITY VOICE. QUESTION: Do you know who you are voting for this fall in the presidential election? Includes four portraits of candidates: Idn Miller (Southfield), Nedal Khzouz (Detroit), Chuck DuQuet (Farmington Hills), and Monnel Burnett (Detroit).

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