

Cable's promise

Work out those problems

Come on, you guys. Get together and work out your problems. That's the humble advice we offer the Farmington Public Schools and the local cable TV organization. School and cable people should start communicating as soon as possible to see if they can't eliminate the problems that seem to be brewing between them.

Apparently, there are problems. Michael Flanagan, superintendent of schools, detailed some of them last week at a meeting of the Southwest Oakland Cable Commission meeting.

For one thing, technical difficulties in cablecasting have delayed the start of several recent school board meetings. For another, the school chief's monthly cable TV show, "From the Desk of Mike Flanagan," was canceled on one of the two local channels without even a phone call or any prior communication, according to Flanagan.

From covering the meeting, we could tell that certain nerves had been touched and feelings hurt. Well, at least some of the problems are now out in the open.

Now, with people on both sides posturing and defending their turf, it can be difficult to discuss this issue. You get a lot of "the-said-that-she-said" and "that's-not-my-department" and "You-never-told-me-there-was-a-problem."

However, we believe that local cable TV has come to be an important part of a civic equation that's supposed to help the governed communicate with the governors.

This was part of the promise of cable TV

Farmington Hills' City Council meetings are on live and the cablecasts are popular.

back when the lines were first strung about 10 years ago. We were told that we'd be closer to our government, our schools, our community if we'd just sign up for cable TV.

For the most part, it's been a promise fulfilled. Farmington Hills' City Council meetings are on live and the cablecasts are popular. The "Monday Night Fights" are what one way used to call them. The school board's been on about a year. No doubt, the gang up on Shiawassee Hill is developing its own following.

We can't speak to the miscommunication about Flanagan's show. The people involved are just going to have to work it out.

But we know there have been technical problems with local cable in the past. In fact, they kind of made a liar out of us a couple of years ago during the city council races.

We praised cable for presenting all the candidate nights and debates, saying there was no longer any reason for voters not to know about the candidates.

Then came the phone calls. "Yes, the candidate forum was supposed to be on, but it wasn't," callers would say. Or, "It was just so bad you couldn't watch it."

So, come on. Let's get the problems solved, be they personal or technical. Let's not let the promise of cable turn out to be a lie.



LETTERS

Thanks glvon

Farmington Families in Action wishes to extend thanks to the many generous, concerned citizens who made our March 7-27 "Spring Splash" car wash fund-raiser a success.

First, Holly and Mark Owen of Colonial Car Wash, who made it possible; Bennie McQueen of Valvoline, Steve Parente of Total Fitness, Hersch Riley of Farmington Tennis Club, Jody Soronen of the Chamber of Commerce, Sue Brooks of the YMCA, our advisory board members and all who sold or bought tickets.

In addition, the Orchard Lake Road Speedy Printing and Studio One Graphics donated a sign and flares; and the managers of three supermarkets: Farmer Jack, A&P and the Middlebelt Road Kroger, who allowed us to set up a ticket table on Saturdays.

Moreover, we appreciate the ongoing support and coverage from the Farmington Observer.

Let's continue to work together for happier, healthier families, and a drug-free community.

Nancy Smith, fund-raising chairperson, FFA

Good work, board

In a recent vote of 6 to 1, the Farmington Board of Education voted to increase the tuition for non-resident students by 25 percent, instead of the 10 percent increases of the past three years.

I was glad to see most of the board take this long-needed action. There is too great a disparity between our district's per-pupil spending and the amount of tuition charged to non-residents. As this rate becomes more equalized, the extra money could certainly be put toward some good use — maybe even a new teacher or two.

Let's at least bring our district up to the Oakland County average of \$4,000 per non-resident pupil. I would encourage the school board to continue to be even more aggressive next year in dealing with these rates.

Bobble Feldman, Farmington Hills

Is project needed?

In the next few weeks the city of Farmington Hills will receive the long-awaited permit from the Department of Natural Resources to start the largest, costliest project ever to happen in this city.

This project will be funded with non-voted bonds and the city will pledge a portion of its available authorized millage to retire the debt on these bonds for the next 20 years and is dependent upon property tax support for repayment.

Our city council several years ago started with good intentions to alleviate flooding in the Kendallwood/Westbrooke subdivision and has already spent over \$10 million on this objective.

In December of 1992, the city manager, behind closed doors tried to educate our city council to accept his plan for the Minnow Pond Drain Program at a cost of \$3 million.

This plan was to provide adequate protection to the 35 homes identified in a recent study but our city council refused to accept his professional opinion and voted the "ultimate" plan

for \$12 million or \$22 million over the lifetime of the bond.

If taxpayers think this project is to benefit the entire city they have been misled. Contact the city manager's office for information. Millions of dollars are still needed throughout the city for additional drain and sewer projects and may have a long wait until additional funding can be found.

Their decision included that the 13 Mile Road improvement which was just completed this year for \$1 million will be torn up for this above mentioned project.

As an official for the Department of Natural Resources stated to me, the cost benefit for this proposed "ultimate" plan is not there but if the city of Farmington Hills wants to spend their money this way, it's their option.

He also commented on the political and engineering lobbying that occurred to push this project through. With over \$1 million at stake for engineering designs alone, this is an important project.

Unfortunately something tragic has happened in this city when taxpayers have to go searching for facts since we can't find them published and our elected officials fail to take the information presented by professionals and use it in a logical rational manner.

When these elected officials are long gone, the city manager and the taxpayers will be paying for these decisions.

Pamela Grassmick, Farmington Hills

The 'why' of it

Isaw the horror in her eyes as she cradled her blood-spattered friend in her arms and looked, from the grounds of Kent State, to an outside world and asked the question "Why?" I cannot rid my mind of that image.

I saw the small girl, naked and burned with napalm, come walking down that stark road, her arms held up and pleading "Why?" That also is forever etched in my mind.

I saw a country rise against itself in righteous indignation with a generation because they looked at Vietnam and asked "Why?" I cannot forget the fear that filled the souls of draft-age males.

I saw the front page of the morning paper. It said "... cigarette smoking contributes to more than 400,000 deaths annually." Eight Vietnam War Veterans Per Year. I walked out onto the street and there was no one there: no bearded hippies waving placards, no police straining to maintain control, no one to ask "Why?"

I saw the beckoning chairs and tall ash trays neatly arranged on each floor of my office building and screamed "Why?"

I saw my friends and co-workers turn from me and I pleaded "What have I done?" And each in turn whispered, "Yours is not to reason why."

Richard Randolph, Farmington Hills

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.

Liability bill aborts resolution

The third angle in the triangle of affordable and adequate health care — medical liability — is part of a large package of legislation that, without much fanfare, is being considered this week in Lansing.

Senate Bill 270, which was passed by the Senate about a month ago, was rewritten and reported out of the House Judiciary Committee Tuesday morning after medical groups and trial attorneys were unable to come up with a compromise of their own.

Action on SB270-H1 could come as early as Thursday on the House floor. The bill is important to physicians and patients both.

The original cap on pain and suffering set at \$250,000 was probably too low because juries likely would dump money into other award areas. But the new, two-tier system of \$500,000 and \$1 million, with its numerous definitions and exceptions, confuses instead of simplifies cases.

Use of expert witnesses who practice medicine part of the time was not addressed in the new version. The public has a right to expect competent testimony, not testimony.

Instead of providing for a sliding fee schedule for attorneys, the rewritten bill rewards lawyers who take a case before a judge, further tying up our judicial system, instead of settling outside of court when possible.

In a move that could force more physicians out of state, doctors would be forced to carry insurance. But at least by carrying insurance, the one out of 10 patients affected by malpractice who reach the legal system would have a chance of recovering some help.

In other action Tuesday, House Bill 4076, providing for licensing and disciplinary action for medical professionals, passed the House without a dissenting vote and is now on the way to the Senate. The bill is a good start, but falls

short in two areas: its narrow scope and its unwillingness to deal with problems.

Proposed legislation ranges from citizen/physician review panels to several recommendations on punitive measures for health care professionals found to be working impaired or consistently harming the public.

The problem is that nowhere does the bill provide for permanently banning "repeat-offender" doctors from practice, which, over a period of time, would reduce malpractice and pain-and-suffering judgments. Michigan's American Medical Association review board needs to be compelled to review more cases and levy stiffer penalties, although the bill is expected to speed up and streamline the process.

Lawmakers, be they federal or state, also need to widen their focus to include:

■ A consideration of defensive medicine which is as large, if not a larger, problem as malpractice — yet it isn't addressed in this package of legislation.

■ An appreciation that the breakdown in trust between physicians and patients is feeding the lawsuit fire.

■ An understanding of the fear patients have of not having, or losing, medical insurance.

■ The problems caused by technology. While wonderful, technology is saving life where it couldn't be saved before (such as premature babies) and prolonging life where, in the past, the patient would have died. The system isn't designed to absorb these costs.

■ The consolidation and administration of care to better manage costs, including vigorous prosecution of fraud.

The model for medical care needs to be redrawn beyond that of a triangle by educating people about health concerns and by publishing research so we can insure health care delivery with minimal liability.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Who's going to win the NCAA basketball championship?

We asked this question at Dagwood's Deli in downtown Farmington.



"Michigan... 'cause Indiana is out of it." Matt Gessler, Farmington Hills



"Michigan, based on last year's experience." Jerry Burger, Westland



"I'm not following it. I don't know." Carl Sanford, Farmington



"Kansas is going to win. Michigan's too cocky." Keith Hymes, Farmington

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