

## Hills agenda

### Some important issues for 1994

**G**oals for Farmington Hills as a new digit rolls up on the decade of the '90s? We have a few and so do the city officials.

Ah, but where the money will come from to accomplish those goals, given the financial uncertainties of the day, is a question that has more than one city manager scratching his head.

Hills officials, who face a full agenda of people-related issues, could use some straight answers from Lansing on questions concerning the availability of property taxes and revenue sharing.

Anyway, from our vantage point as impartial observers, here are some items for the city's 1994 agenda:

- **Mersey Center** — The city's buying part of it for its senior citizen programs. How about a citywide contest to rename the place? Once they're owners, not renters, officials are going to have to hammer out some policies about who's eligible to use it and who'll have to pay. The Hills senior program has been so successful for Farmington-area folks over the years. Let's hope that can continue under the new setup.
- **Founders Sports Park** — It's known as the Sod Farm (that's what it used to be) and it was touted as the solution to this joke-a-birdwatchers now that ragged over use of Heritage Park. Hopefully, the Sod Farm will be ready for spring and summer use so this spot can be put to rest for good.
- **Woodland Hills Park** — Farmington Hills owns acres of undeveloped wooded land west of Farmington Road and south of I-696. You can stand in the middle and think you're in some forest in the UP. We like the idea of keeping most of the property intact with just trails and a small parking area. Open space should be treas-

ured in Farmington Hills, which has become urbanized over the years. To overdevelop Woodland Hills would be to further destroy the quality of life.

■ **Ice arena** — The studies are still out on the idea of an ice arena in the city. There are plenty of arguments for it, and we've said before that we favor an ice arena — if it's a first-rate one and some plan can be developed to make it pay.

■ **Library** — The voters said no to money for a new main library in August. We supported the proposals, but questioned the location of the new building. A new library is needed. Let the search continue.

■ **Road improvements** — There are several that the city manager says the city must "strive to get started." Farmington Hills' end corner — M-102/Grand River/Halsford — should get whatever special attention can be afforded. There have been too many lunchcons (and breakfasts) and speeches detailing the problem, and not enough money shaken loose from federal and state coffers to solve it. Meanwhile, traffic continues to snarl, and one section of the city is put at a real disadvantage.

■ **Gypsy moth spraying** — This could be a hot issue in '94 if Farmington Hills has to join other cities and townships in paying for a spraying program that attempts to eliminate these pests. City officials need to listen to all opinions on spraying — including those from people who'd rather not be sprayed.

■ **Public involvement** — People love to complain about the city and how it's run. But those with concerns should show up at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads Monday evenings when the city council meets. Even those with no specific complaint should take the time to get to know their city officials. You'd be surprised how good they'll be if they know someone is watching.

## 'Big 3' can resolve area woes

**A**rcher, McNamara, Patterson. With the pledges of cooperation from this "Big 3" and an improving economy driven by Chrysler, Ford and GM, 1994 could be the turning point in the rebirth of metro Detroit.

The election of Dennis Archer as Detroit mayor — and his recognition of the suburbs as part of the solution to regional problems — could be the beginning of an era of political cooperation that is needed to resolve those problems.

Familiar problems include:

- **EDUCATION** — March 15, the old tax deadline, will be an important date for Michigan schools. Voters will decide how the state will fund public education.
- **URBAN SPRAWL** — Early in his campaign to replace Coleman Young as mayor, Dennis Archer made it a point to come to the suburbs, to address this problem. Officials here are well aware that the migration to our suburban communities will be our downfall, if we don't address the same problems as a region.
- **ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION** — The auto is still king in the state and area. But if the North American Free Trade Agreement means anything, more than a decade of talk about diversifying industry must become more than hollow sounds.

And with the trend toward larger health care networks in a region where it is a major industry, national efforts at reform could be an opportunity regionally, with several working models of what has been proposed nationwide.

■ **REBUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE** — With the possible resolution of school financing, the state and region should make this a priority. Fuel prices are lower and the economy is improving, so a fuel tax to pay for road improvements (Michigan is 45th in per capita spending on roads) is in order.

Gov. John Engler's formula of increased privatization won't work when it comes to some public works projects. It takes money.

Michigan, the auto capital of the world, has roads that are an embarrassment, compared to neighboring states such as Ohio and Indiana. The governor has been announcing a lot of highway projects, but they come from federal funds, not a good, long-term source.

■ **STATE PARKS** — Our parks are not only a money-maker for a state that depends on tourism, but they are an irreplaceable natural resource. The sad fact is that the state has put the emphasis on user fees to support the parks. And the fees have risen while the parks have deteriorated. We must find a way to preserve this resource that cannot be withdrawn, or we will face losing our state treasures.

■ **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION** — Mayor Archer, in his campaign, called for putting the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority and Detroit Department of Transportation together. Regional leaders should embrace this approach and come up with an area-wide funding plan, a sticky issue in the past.

With a new Detroit mayor who has embraced regional cooperation, 1994 could be a benchmark year for the area.



ARKIE HUDKINS

## LETTERS

### Quite a memory

**T**hank you for publishing the description and picture of our class production of "The Wizard of Oz."

The students worked very hard on this play, and being recognized in the Farmington Observer is a memory they will never forget.

Cathie Gural, Gill School teacher

### Student says thanks

**T**hank you for putting a picture of Gill School's production of "The Wizard of Oz" in the Farmington Observer.

I am in the class that put on the play and it means a lot to us. Our hard work and preparation paid off. You captured a moment that no one involved will ever forget.

I am lucky enough to be in the picture (as Dorothy) and it is dear to me. By the way, I have a copy of the picture, and I shall forever treasure it.

Thank you for making that moment, that one moment, where we were all in the spotlight, special.

Lindsey Mergener, Gill School student

### Paper route helps

**O**ften I read in your paper letters from individuals expressing some form of appreciation to another individual in our community. I felt it was time that the Farmington Observer and route manager Jim Heriford received a voice of gratitude.

My son is 9 years old and very proud to say as of this fall he became an Observer newspaper carrier. Jon's decision to become a carrier was supported by myself and a valued friend, Pearl Wisdom. Pearl helps Jon with his deliveries when I am not available.

I feel inclined to let others know about the wonderful values and responsibilities that this route has given my son, which cannot be matched by any other experience.

Jon is learning the benefits of his hard work: spending his collection money, putting money in his bank account, working toward his goal award, interacting with all types of people, having commitments to his customers, and not forgetting to have a good time doing it.

Often Jon makes a game out of his deliveries. He tries to deliver his papers without making the dogs bark or having the motion-detector floodlights on houses turn on.

The time I spend with my son assisting him with this commitment is so rewarding. I have seen him mature greatly from this responsibility. I often wonder why more families don't make the effort to try this experience for themselves.

A special note of thanks to Mr. Heriford, who is the ideal person in nurturing these children ranging from age 10 to 16 years old. He is genuine in his efforts to assist these children in becoming responsible carriers.

He works with these children as adults and they respond wonderfully to him.

So in closing, my appreciation to the Observer. My son is learning a valuable lesson in life through a child's experience. It is never too early to be responsible, earn your own money, and remember to have a good time while doing it.

Anita Bogorad, Farmington Hills

### Some tough questions

**D**oes Judy Downey really believe that she speaks for the residents and businesses in Farmington when she pushes an idea like go-cart racing in the Downtown Center parking lot on a Sunday?

Does this event help to develop the image we want to project for our city? Has Judy Downey guaranteed city council that the costs associated with this event (insurance, set-up, cleanup, security, etc.) will not exceed the revenue it generates?

Is it really worth the disruption to city residents for an estimated profit of \$4,000?

As a branch of city government in Farmington, the Downtown Development Authority has a responsibility to answer such questions.

It was not too long ago that we remember a clock tower planned for the Masonic Temple at minimal cost to the city, as money was to be donated by the 125th Celebration Committee.

This folly ended in city council committing \$40,000 for the design and development of a "flower box."

No wonder we have a feeling of *deja vu*.

Sandra and Michael Shelly, Farmington

### Realtors help the needy

**I**n 1992 Lighthouse in Pontiac decided to affirmatively respond to overwhelming requests from donors and clients and expand our holiday programs to include Christmas for families. This would be in addition to our public service to seniors, school groups, and specific Lighthouse clients. Lighthouse North had already responded by including families some years ago.

To organize this expanded role, Lighthouse got a wonderful gift this summer. The Birmingham Bloomfield Board of Realtors and especially Carol Pray, Lynn Baker, and Sandy Christoffer offered to organize and chair the gigantic Christmas gift exchange. These caring people organized their peers, secured hundreds of donations, and operated Christmas central at the Little Caesars Love Kitchen for over four weeks.

The members of the Birmingham Bloomfield Board and especially Carol, Lynn, and Sandy have warmed the lives of countless of your neighbors in Oakland County. Join Lighthouse volunteers and staff in three hefty cheers for these incredibly generous people.

K. Norven Keating, Executive Director

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

Do you favor an increase in sales tax or income tax to pay for public education?



'Increase income taxes. It's more proportional to what people make.'

Kevin Lazroff  
Farmington



'Sales tax... it takes everyone equally.'

Richard Gaul  
Farmington Hills



'Neither... let the people in Lansing figure out another way to finance education.'

Bill Pearson  
Farmington



'Sales tax... it's more fair because everybody pays.'

Alice Hunt  
Farmington Hills

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