

On their terms Manage this development

They'll tell you they moved out here for a reason. Now, because of unwanted development, they feel that reason is disappearing in a hurry.

The *here* in this development saga happens to be eastern Farmington Hills in the 12 Mile/Middlebelt area, but it could be just about anywhere in the suburban sprawl that *ares* across the northern and western edges of metropolitan Detroit.

In Farmington Hills, the *cause celebre* for some angry residents is a proposed commercial and residential project that would replace a wooded area southeast of 12 Mile and Middlebelt.

Residents stewed when the project passed the planning commission. They steamed when it was passed by a divided city council. And finally their lids blew off when they found that the developer, Gary Jenna, had contributed \$150 to Mayor Larry Lichtman's re-election campaign last year.

Now these folks, many of them 18- or 20-year residents, are hopping mad at Lichtman and the other three (Joanne Smith, Jon Grant and Nancy Bates) who said yes to the project.

They're on the phone, in the Observer office and stomping through the subdivisions with petitions. We've even heard the dreaded R (for recall) word muttered.

One of their more aroused members, Sharon Stein, has written a guest column on the subject. It appears on the page opposite this one.

These residents, it seems to us, are just afraid that growth, like old age, is going to come creeping along whether they want it or not. There are certain things they can do to put it off. They can resolve to live with it more

comfortably. They can even enjoy it and use it to their advantage.

The trick is to have the development on their terms, not the developer's and not the politicians'.

That's why we're pleased to note that the residents' anger seems to be constructive in nature. Those we've talked to seem to realize that the section can't stay woody and wild forever.

Their petition contains a number of excellent suggestions:

■ New businesses there will not sell or serve liquor.

■ Businesses will be closed for not less than five hours a day. In other words, no round-the-clock supermarkets.

■ Businesses will not be constructed with notice of construction in the newspapers and on cable TV.

■ Projects will be limited to 6 acres and constructed in adherence to zoned setbacks and parking requirements.

■ Projects will be built so as not to create a nuisance to any surrounding property.

■ There will be a reduction of the housing to a maximum of 140 units.

The residents have put on a good show. They've displayed their anger - and the city and developer should not underestimate it. They've also done their homework and come up with some reasonable alternatives.

By coming in on such a constructive manner, the residents have shown that they are willing to work with the developer and the city. Hopefully, the result will be a development that everyone can live with.

Now it's up to the city and the developer to listen.

Empowerment: On menu for 4th

For most of us, the Fourth of July means nothing more than another three-day weekend filled with backyard cookouts, fireworks, parades, or maybe a trip up north.

Rarely do we spend time thinking about the revolutionary act, the defiance to the established world order that the Declaration of Independence really was.

It was a document put together by businessmen, farmers and shopkeepers who basically said they had a right to govern themselves. Such an idea doesn't seem very radical by today's standards, but more than 200 years ago, in a world ruled by kings and rich landowners, it was revolutionary.

Those ideas are as alive and powerful today as they were in Philadelphia on that hot July night when they were penned by Thomas Jefferson. Just stop by a local school board or government meeting and listen to the people complain about how they're being treated by government.

When a resident stands up to speak out, he or she is using one of the most powerful ideas in the Declaration of Independence: Government exists for the people.

That idea was as powerful a weapon against the rule of English kings as it is now against the bureaucrats who often forget that they work for us and not the other way around.

Over the years we've had those who would try to control, kill, or modify our version of

democracy expressed in that document. Those threats have come from the political right and left.

Republicans use the phrase "family values" as though they own them. They use it as a way to discredit gays. It's a simple ploy to take a political voice away from a portion of our society.

Those on the left are just as guilty. Political correctness is their version of attempting to take the political voice away from those who see things differently and wish to express themselves.

But saner souls will prevail. It just takes a couple of simple acts. Speaking up at government meetings, writing letters to elected officials, and voting give us power.

Suburban communities are having primary elections in August. Traditionally the turnout is light, allowing special interest groups to swing an election. Those groups often have a single agenda. They aren't concerned about "We the people."

Our job is to vote in those elections. The Declaration of Independence established the idea that government should do the best job it can for the largest number of people.

But we can't rely on a more-than-200-year-old piece of paper. We have to make sure that document is alive. And the only way to do that is to become involved in our communities.

Think about it as you celebrate on July 4; then act on Aug. 2.



LETTERS

'79 Hawks soared

Softball a non-winning tradition at Harrison High School? Not always.

An article which appeared earlier this spring in the Observer sparked my interest and caused me to reflect back on a time in the 1970s when the softball Hawks were definitely a factor, and at times a dominating one, in the Western Six League.

I congratulate the 1994 Harrison teams on their success this season and wish them the same for 1995. Records are made to be broken, and it was time that a Hawks team did just that, as they shattered the 17-3 record set by the Harrison High School girls in 1979.

Probably not many people in Observerland remember the hard work and dedication of those girls, but it was definitely there. I know. I was their coach for nine seasons, from 1971-79. They were years to be remembered and I reflect back on them often.

Once again, I congratulate the new breed of 1994 and at the same time I would like to recognize the "ladies of spring," 1979 (as their names appeared then): Sharon Agar, Linda Bache, Ann Corbett, Barb Erickson, Debbie Goodwin, Gina Kilka, Helen Laskaris, Peggy Maher, Kathleen McManus, Geri Marcellino, Cynthia Pink, Kathy Purcell and Lori Webb.

Sandy Rivers, White Lake Township

Smell the mail

To Postmaster Mark Bates: Free coffee at post offices? Cut out the coffee crap at the post office. All we expect is good service, which is now sadly lacking.

No one drinks that coffee. What kind of nonsense is this? Wake up and smell the mail.

A. Dillon, Farmington

'Nothing but air'

Although once in the past I criticized councilman Aldo Vagnozzi, perhaps unfairly in a moment of anger, I want to commend him on his recent suggestion of taking live telephone calls at council meetings.

It may or may not work, but by the very suggestion it shows he has our best interests in mind. Bravo to you, Mr. Vagnozzi.

Although I was born in this community six decades ago and have lived here since, I have never had anything more than a passing interest in the way our local government was run. Needless to say, everything has changed during this time.

There are more problems and concerns of citizens and government affecting more people, and the solutions and ways of handling

them have become more complicated.

In recent years and months, I have had the experience, for one reason or another, of coming into contact with various facets of local government. This experience has sometimes been pleasant and sometimes unpleasant, but always a learning experience.

I have gotten to meet some of our top leaders and get an idea of their intellects (always impressive) and what they are about. They all seem to want what is best for our community, but there is a common thread running throughout.

They all make decisions without always objectively taking the time to fairly gather pro and con information and analyzing it before making their decisions.

They are in too much of a hurry, feel unrealistic anger at disagreement and tend to be emotional and subjective in their decisions, rather than open minded and objective.

I don't expect many of them to agree with this, but it is because what I just said is true.

I have been around the business world for many years. I can assure anyone who has any doubts that City Manager Bill Costick is one of the most adept and perceptive individuals I have ever met. He is well qualified for his job.

I have met chief of police Dwyer. He is tough and intelligent. He looks the part. They, the council and others, all want what is best for the city and its citizens. But they are not always right.

They make mistakes because they are human. The problem is, how does an ordinary citizen who sees or thinks he sees mistakes by government get their views heard, (other than by council, city manager or police chief who may have made the mistakes) and acted upon?

When you have reached the top, there is nothing but air above you. The mistake may as well be set in concrete. Perhaps Mr. Vagnozzi is right on track: more public awareness and input.

Kenneth Kemp, Farmington Hills

Are you listening?

In order to save the taxpayers lots of money, why don't we release all of the prisoners and close up all of the jails? Isn't this a wonderful idea? Hmmm . . . Gov. Engler, are you listening?

Leon I. Scholchit, 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.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Has the media been fair in covering the O.J. Simpson story?



"They blew it all out of proportion - and I think he's innocent. He was set up."

Mary Gould Livonia



"No. They're trying to get him in the media. And I have some doubts about if he did it."

Ken Romps Detroit



"No. They're doing the same thing they do whenever they cover a celebrity."

Marlene Hochstain Farmington Hills



"It's blown out of proportion. I don't think they know what they're talking about. They're making things up."

Lakey Franklin Farmington

The Farmington Observer

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